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CLASSIC MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE STORIES

EDITED BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE

MODERN FRENCH

Jules Claretie — Pierre Mille

Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant

Villiers de l'Isle Adam — Erckmann-Chatrian

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Jules Claretie

The Crime of the Boulevard

I

"WHERE does Bernardet live?"

"At the passage to the right—yes, that house which you see with the grating and garden behind it."

The man to whom a passer-by had given this information hurried away in the direction pointed out; although gasping for breath, he tried to run, in order more quickly to reach the little house at the end of the passage of the Elysée des Beaux-Arts. This passage, a sort of cul-de-sac, on either side of which were black buildings, strange old houses, and dilapidated storehouses, opened upon a boulevard filled with life and movement; with people promenading; with the noise of tramways; with gayety and light.

The man wore the dress and had the bearing of a workman. He was very short, very fat, and his bald head was bared to the warm October rain. He was a workman, in truth, who labored in his concierge lodge, making over and mending garments for his neighbors, while his wife looked after the house, swept the staircases, and complained of her lot.

Mme. Moniche found life hard and disagreeable, and regretted that it had not given her what it promised when, at eighteen, and very pretty, she had expected something better than to watch beside a tailor bent over his work in a concierge's lodge. Into her life a tragedy had suddenly precipitated itself, and Mme. Moniche found, that day, something to brighten up her afternoon. Entering, a moment before, the apartment occupied by M. Rovère, she had found

her lodger lying on his back, his eyes fixed, his arms flung out, with a gash across his throat!

M. Rovère had lived alone in the house for many years, receiving a few mysterious persons. Mme. Moniche looked after his apartment, entering by using her own key whenever it was necessary; and her lodger had given her permission to come there at any time to read the daily papers.

Mme. Moniche hurried down the stairs.

"M. Rovère is dead! M. Rovère has been murdered! His throat has been cut! He has been assassinated!" And pushing her husband out of the door, she exclaimed:

"The police! Go for the police!"

This word "police" awakened in the tailor's mind, not the thought of the neighboring Commissary, but the thought of the man to whom he felt that he ought to appeal, whom he ought to consult. This man was the good little M. Bernardet, who passed for a man of genius of his kind, at the Sureté, and for whom Moniche had often repaired coats and rehemmed trousers.

From the mansion in the Boulevard de Clichy, where Moniche lived, to M. Bernardet's house, was but a short distance, and the concierge knew the way very well, as he had often been there. But the poor man was so stupefied, so overwhelmed, by the sudden appearance of his wife in his room, by the brutal revelation which came to him as the blow of a fist, by the horrible manner of M. Rovère's death, that he lost his head. Horrified, breathless, he asked the first passer-by where Bernardet lived, and he ran as fast as he could in the direction pointed out.

Arrived at the grating, the worthy man, a little confused, stopped short. He was very strongly moved. It seemed to him that he had been cast into the agony of a horrible nightmare. An assassination in the house! A murder in the Boulevard de Clichy in broad daylight, just over his head, while he was quietly repairing a vest!

He stood looking at the house without ringing. M. Bernardet was, no doubt, breakfasting with his family, for it was Sunday, and the police officer, meeting Moniche the

evening before, had said to him: "To-morrow is my birthday."

Moniche hesitated a moment, then he rang the bell. He was not kept waiting; the sudden opening of the grating startled him; he pushed back the door and entered. He crossed a little court, at the end of which was a pavilion; he mounted the three steps and was met on the threshold by a little woman, as rosy and fresh as an apple, who, napkin in hand, gayly saluted him.

"Eh, Monsieur Moniche!"

It was Mme. Bernardet, a Burgundian woman, about thirty-five years of age, trim and coquettish, who stepped back so that the tailor could enter.

"What is the matter, Monsieur Moniche?"

Poor Moniche rolled his frightened eyes around and gasped out: "I must speak to M. Bernardet."

"Nothing easier," said the little woman. "M. Bernardet is in the garden. Yes, he is taking advantage of the beautiful day; he is taking a group——"

"What group?"

"You know very well, photography is his passion. Come with me."

And Mme. Bernardet pointed to the end of the corridor, where an open door gave a glimpse of the garden at the rear of the house. M. Bernardet, the Inspector, had posed his three daughters with their mother about a small table, on which coffee had been served.

"I had just gone in to get my napkin, when I heard you ring," Mme. Bernardet said.

Bernardet made a sign to Moniche not to advance. He was as plump and as gay as his wife. His moustache was red, his double chin smooth-shaven and rosy, his eyes had a sharp, cunning look, his head was round and closely cropped.

The three daughters, clothed alike in Scotch plaid, were posing in front of a photographic apparatus which stood on a tripod. The eldest was about twelve years of age; the youngest a child of five. They were all three strangely alike.

M. Bernardet, in honor of his birthday, was taking a picture of his daughters. The ferret who, from morning till night, tracked robbers and malefactors into their hiding places, was taking his recreation in his damp garden. The sweet idyl of this hidden life repaid him for his unceasing investigations, for his trouble and fatiguing man-hunts through Paris.

"There!" he said, clapping the cap over the lens. "That is all! Go and play now, my dears. I am at your service, Moniche."

He shut up his photographic apparatus, pulling out the tripod from the deep soil in which it was imbedded, while his daughters joyously ran to their mother. The young girls stood gazing at Moniche with their great blue eyes, piercing and clear. Bernardet turned to look at him, and at once divined that something had happened.

"You are as white as your handkerchief, Moniche," he said.

"Ah, Monsieur Bernardet! It is enough to terrify one! There has been a murder in the house."

"A murder?"

His face, which had been so gay and careless, suddenly took on a strange expression, at once tense and serious; the large blue eyes shone as with an inward fire.

"A murder, yes, Monsieur Bernardet. M. Rovère—you did not know him?"

"No."

"He was an original—a recluse. And now he has been assassinated. My wife went to his room to read the papers——"

Bernardet interrupted him brusquely:

"When did it happen?"

"Ah! *Dame!* Monsieur, I do not know. All I know is my wife found the body still warm. She was not afraid; she touched it."

"Still warm!"

These words struck Bernardet. He reflected a moment, then he said:

"Come; let us go to your house."

Then, struck with a sudden idea, he added: "Yes, I will take it."

He unfastened his camera from the tripod. "I have three plates left which I can use," he said.

Mme. Bernardet, who was standing at a little distance, with the children clinging to her skirts, perceived that the concierge had brought important news. Bernardet's smiling face had suddenly changed; the expression became serious, his glance fixed and keen.

"Art thou going with him?" Mme. Bernardet asked, as she saw her husband buckle on a leather bandolier.

"Yes!" he answered.

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* my poor Sunday, and this evening—can we not go to the little theater at Montmartre this evening?"

"I do not know," he replied.

"You promised! The poor children! You promised to take them to see Closerie des Genets!"

"I cannot tell; I do not know—I will see," the little man said. "My dear Moniche, to-day is my fortieth birthday. I promised to take them to the theater—but I must go with you." Turning to his wife, he added: "But I will come back as soon as I can. Come, Moniche, let us hasten to your M. Rovère."

He kissed his wife on the forehead, and each little girl on both cheeks, and, strapping the camera in the bandolier, he went out, followed by the tailor. As they walked quickly along Moniche kept repeating: "Still warm; yes, Monsieur Bernardet, still warm!"

II

Bernardet was quite an original character. Among the agents, some of whom were very odd, and among the devoted subalterns, this little man, with his singular mind, with his insatiable curiosity, reading anything he could lay his hands on, passed for a literary person. His chief sometimes laughingly said to him:

"Bernardet, take care! You have literary ambitions. You will begin to dream of writing for the papers."

"Oh, no, Monsieur Morel—but what would you?—I am simply amusing myself."

This was true. Bernardet was a born hunter. With a superior education, he might have become a savant, a frequenter of libraries, passing his life in working on documents and in deciphering manuscripts. The son of a dairyman; brought up in a Lancastrian school; reading with avidity all the daily papers; attracted by everything mysterious which happened in Paris; having accomplished his military duty, he applied for admission to the Police Bureau, as he would have embarked for the New World, for Mexico, or for Tonquin, in order to travel in a new country. Then he married, so that he might have, in his checkered existence, which was dangerous and wearying—a haven of rest, a fireside of peaceful joy.

So he lived a double life—tracking malefactors like a bloodhound, and cultivating his little garden. There he devoured old books, for which he had paid a few sous at some bookstall; he read and pasted in old, odd leaves, re-bound them himself, and cut clippings from papers. He filled his round, bald head with a mass of facts which he investigated, classified, put into their proper place, to be brought forth as occasion demanded.

He was an inquisitive person, a very inquisitive person, indeed. Curiosity filled his life. He performed with pleasure the most fatiguing and repulsive tasks that fall to a police officer's lot. They satisfied the original need of his nature, and permitted him to see everything, to hear everything, to penetrate into the most curious mysteries. To-day, in a dress suit with white tie, carelessly glancing over the crowds at the opera, to discover the thieves who took opera glasses, which they sent to accomplices in Germany to be sold; to-morrow, going in ragged clothes to arrest a murderer in some cutthroat den in the Glacière.

M. Bernardet had taken possession of the office of the most powerful bankers, seized their books, and made them

go away with him in a cab. He had followed, by order, the intrigues of more than one fine lady, who owed to him her salvation. What if M. Bernardet had thought fit to speak? But he never spoke, and reporters came out worsted from any attempt at an interview with him. "An interview is silver, but silence is gold," he was wont to say, for he was not a fool.

He had assisted at spiritual séances and attended secret meetings of Anarchists. He had occupied himself with occult matters, consulting the magicians of chance, and he had at his tongue's end the list of conspirators. He knew the true names of the famous Greeks who shuffled cards as one scouts about under an assumed name. The gambling hells were all familiar to him; he knew the churches in whose dark corners associates assembled to talk of *affaires*, who did not wish to be seen in beershops nor spied upon in cabarets.

Of the millions in Paris, he knew the secrets of this whirlpool of humanity.

Oh! if he had ever become prefect of police, he would have studied his Paris, not at a distance, looking up statistics in books, or from the windows of a police bureau, but in the streets, in wretched lodgings, in hovels, in the asylums of misery and of crime. But Bernardet was not ambitious. Life suited him very well as he found it. His good wife had brought to him a small dower, and Bernardet, content with this poor little fortune, found that he had all the power he wanted—the power, when occasion demanded, of putting his hand on the shoulder of a former Minister and of taking a murderer by the throat.

One day a financier, threatened with imprisonment in Mazas, pleased him very much. Bernardet entered his office to arrest him. He did not wish to have a row in the bank. The police officer and banker found themselves alone, face to face, in a very small room, a private office, with heavy curtains and a thick carpet, which stifled all noise.

"Fifty thousand francs if you will let me escape," said the banker.

"M. le Comte jests——"

"A hundred thousand!"

"The pleasantry is very great, but it is a pleasantry."

Then the Count, very pale, said: "And what if I crack your head?"

"My brother officers are waiting for me," Bernardet simply replied. "They know that our interview does not promise to be a long one, and this last proposition, which I wish to forget like the others, would only aggravate, I believe, if it became known, M. le Comte's case."

Two minutes afterward the banker went out, preceding Bernardet, who followed him with bared head. The banker said to his employees, in an easy tone: "Good-bye for the moment, Messieurs; I will return soon."

It was also Bernardet who, visiting the Bank Hauts-Plateaux, said to his chief: "Monsieur Morel, something very serious is taking place there."

"What is it, Bernardet?"

"I do not know, but there is a meeting of the bank directors, and to-day I saw two servants carry a man in there in an invalid chair. It was the Baron de Cheylard."

"Well?"

"Baron Cheylard, in his quality of ex-Senator of the Second Empire, of ex-President of the Council, an ex-Commissioner of Industrial Expositions, is Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor. Grand Cross—that is to say, that he can be prosecuted only after a decision of the Council of the Order. And then, you understand—if the Bank of Hauts-Plateaux demands the presence of its Vice-president, the Baron of Cheylard, paralyzed, half dead——"

"It means that it has need of a thunderbolt?"

"The Grand Cross, Monsieur. They would hesitate to deliver up to us the Grand Cross."

"You are right, Bernardet. The bank must be in a bad fix. And you are a very keen observer. The mind of a literary man, Bernardet."

"Oh, rather a photographic eye, Monsieur Morel. The habit of using a kodak."

Thus Bernardet passed his life in Paris. Capable of

amassing a fortune in some Tricoche Agency if he had wished to exploit, for his own benefit, his keen observing powers, he thought only of doing his duty, bringing up his little girls, and loving his wife. Mme. Bernardet was amazed at the astonishing stories which her husband often related to her, and very proud that he was such an able man.

M. Bernardet hurried toward M. Rovère's lodgings and Moniche trotted along beside him. As they neared the house they saw that a crowd had begun to collect.

"It is known already," Moniche said. "Since I left they have begun——"

"If I enter there," interrupted the officer, "it is all right. You have a right to call anyone you choose to your aid. But I am not a magistrate. You must go for a Commissary of Police."

"Oh, M. Bernardet!" Moniche exclaimed. "You are worth more than all the Commissaries put together."

"That does not make it so. A Commissary is a Commissary. Go and hunt for one."

"But since you are here——"

"But I am nothing. We must have a magistrate."

"You are not a magistrate, then?"

"I am simply a police spy."

Then he crossed the street.

The neighbors had gathered about the door like a swarm of flies around a honeycomb. A rumor had spread about which brought together a crowd animated by the morbid curiosity which is aroused in some minds at the hint of a mystery, and attracted by that strange magnetism which that sinister thing, "a crime," arouses. The women talked in shrill tones, inventing strange stories and incredible theories. Some of the common people hurried up to learn the news.

At the moment Bernardet came up, followed by the concierge, a coupé stopped at the door, and a tall man got out, asking:

"Where is M. Morel? I wish to see M. Morel."

The Chief had not yet been advised, and he was not there.

But the tall young man suddenly recognized Bernardet, and laid hold of him, pulling him after him through the half-open door, which Moniche hastened to shut against the crowd.

"We must call some officers," Bernardet said to the concierge, "or the crowd will push in."

Mme. Moniche was standing at the foot of the staircase, surrounded by the lodgers, men and women, to whom she was recounting, for the twentieth time, the story of how she had found M. Rovère with his throat cut.

"I was going in to read the paper—the story—it is very interesting that story. The moment had come when the baron had insulted the American colonel. M. Rovère said to me only yesterday, poor man: 'I am anxious to find out which one will be killed—the colonel or the baron.' He will never know! And it is he——"

"Madame Moniche," interrupted Bernardet, "have you anyone whom you can send for a Commissary?"

"Anyone?"

"Yes," added Moniche. "M. Bernardet needs a magistrate. It is not difficult to understand."

"A Commissary?" repeated Mme. Moniche. "That is so. A Commissary; and what if I go for the Commissary myself, Monsieur Bernardet?"

"All right, provided you do not let the crowd take the house by assault when you open the door."

"Fear nothing," the woman said, happy in having something important to do, in relating the horrible news to the Commissary how, when she was about to enter the room for the purpose of reading, the——

While she was going toward the door Bernardet slowly mounted the two flights of stairs, followed by Moniche and the tall young man who had arrived in his coupé at a gallop, in order to get the first news of the murder and make a "scoop" for his paper.

The news had traveled fast, and his paper had sent him in haste to get all the details of the affair which could be obtained.

The three men reached M. Rovère's door. Moniche unlocked it and stepped back. Bernardet, with the reporter at his heels, notebook in hand, entered the room.

III

Nothing in the ante-chamber indicated that a tragedy had taken place there. There were pictures on the walls, pieces of faïence, some arms of rare kinds, Japanese swords, and a Malay creese. Bernardet glanced at them as he passed by.

"He is in the salon," said the concierge in a low tone.

One of the folding doors stood open, and, stopping on the threshold, in order to take in the entire aspect of the place, Bernardet saw in the center of the room, lying on the floor in a pool of blood, the body of M. Rovère, clothed in a long blue dressing-gown, bound at the waist with a heavy cord, which lay in coils on the floor, like a serpent. The corpse was extended between the two windows which opened on the Boulevard de Clichy, and Bernardet's first thought was that it was a miracle that the victim could have met his death in such a horrible manner, two steps from the passers-by on the street.

"Whoever struck the blow did it quickly," thought the police officer. He advanced softly toward the body, casting his eye upon the inert mass and taking in at a glance the smallest objects near it and the most minute details. He bent over and studied it thoroughly.

M. Rovère seemed living in his tragic pose. The pale face, with its pointed and well-trimmed gray beard, expressed in its fierce immobility a sort of menacing anger. This man of about fifty years had evidently died cursing someone in his supreme agony. The frightful wound seemed like a large red cravat, which harmonized strangely with the half-whitened beard, the end of which was wet with blood.

But what struck Bernardet above everything else, arrested

his attention, and glued him to the spot, was the look, the extraordinary expression in the eyes. The mouth was open, as if to cry out, the eyes seemed to menace someone, and the lips about to speak.

They were frightful. Those tragic eyes were wide open, as if transfixed by fear or fury.

They seemed fathomless, staring ready to start from their sockets. The eyebrows above them were black and bristling.

They seemed living eyes in that dead face. They told of a final struggle, of some atrocious duel of looks and of words. They appeared, in their ferocious immobility, as when they gazed upon the murderer, eye to eye, face to face.

Bernardet looked at the hands.

They were contracted and seemed, in some obstinate resistance, to have clung to the neck or the clothing of the assassin.

"There ought to be blood under the nails, since he made a struggle," said Bernardet, thinking aloud.

And Paul Rodier, the reporter, hurriedly wrote, "There was blood under the nails."

Bernardet returned again and again to the eyes—those wide-open eyes, frightful, terrible eyes, which, in their fierce depths, retained without doubt the image or phantom of some nightmare of death.

He touched the dead man's hand. The flesh had become cold and *rigor mortis* was beginning to set in.

The reporter saw the little man take from his pocket a sort of rusty silver ribbon and unroll it, and heard him ask Moniche to take hold of one end of it; this ribbon or thread looked to Paul Rodier like brass wire. Bernardet prepared his kodak.

"And above everything else," murmured Bernardet, "let us preserve the expression of those eyes."

"Close the shutters. The darkness will be more complete."

The reporter assisted Moniché in order to hasten the work. The shutters closed, the room was quite dark, and

Bernardet began his task. Counting off a few steps, he selected the best place from which to take the picture.

"Be kind enough to light the end of the magnesium wire," he said to the concierge. "Have you any matches?"

"No, Monsieur Bernardet."

The police officer indicated, by a sign of the head, a match safe which he had noticed on entering the room.

"There are some there."

Bernardet had with one sweeping glance of the eye taken in everything in the room; the fauteuils, scarcely moved from their places; the pictures hanging on the walls; the mirrors; the bookcases; the cabinets, etc.

Moniche went to the mantelpiece and took a match from the box. It was M. Rovère himself who furnished the light by which a picture of his own body was taken.

"We could obtain no picture in this room without the magnesium wire," said the agent, as calm while taking a photograph of the murdered man as he had been a short time ago in his garden. "The light is insufficient. When I say 'Go!' Moniche, you must light the wire, and I will take three or four negatives. Do you understand? Stand there to my left. Now! Attention!"

Bernardet took his position and the porter stood ready, match and wire in hand, like a gunner who awaits the order to fire.

"Go!" said the agent.

A rapid, clear flame shot up, and suddenly lighted the room. The pale face seemed livid, the various objects in the room took on a fantastic appearance, in this sort of tempestuous apotheosis, and Paul Rodier hastily inscribed on his writing pad: "Picturesque—bizarre—marvelous—devilish—suggestive."

"Let us try it again," said M. Bernardet.

For the third time in this weird light the visage of the dead man appeared, whiter, more sinister, frightful; the wound deeper, the gash redder; and the eyes, those wide-open, fixed, tragic, menacing, speaking eyes—eyes filled with scorn, with hate, with terror, with the ferocious resistance

of a last struggle for life; immovable, eloquent—seemed under the fantastic light to glitter, to be alive, to menace someone.

"That is all," said Bernardet very softly. "If with these three negatives——"

He stopped to look around toward the door, which was closed. Someone was raining ringing blows on the door, loud and imperative.

"It is the Commissary; open the door, Moniche."

The reporter was busy taking notes, describing the salon, sketching it, drawing a plan for his journal.

It was, in fact, the Commissary, who was followed by Mme. Moniche and a number of curious persons who had forced their way in when the front door opened.

The Commissary, before entering, took a comprehensive survey of the room, and said in a short tone: "Everyone must go out. Madame, make all these people go out. No one must enter."

There arose an uproar—each one tried to explain his right to be there. They were all possessed with an irresistible desire to assist at this sinister investigation.

"But we belong to the press!"

"The reporters may enter when they have showed their cards," the Commissary replied. "The others—no!" There was a murmur from the crowd.

"The others—no!" repeated the Commissary. He made a sign to two officers who accompanied him, and they demanded the reporters' cards of identification. The concourse of curious ones rebelled, protested, growled, and declaimed against the representatives of the press, who took precedence everywhere.

"The Fourth Power!" shouted an old man from the foot of the staircase. He lived in the house and passed for a correspondent of the Institute. He shouted furiously: "When a crime is committed under my very roof, I am not even allowed to write an account of it, and strangers, because they are reporters, can have the exclusive privilege of writing it up!"

The Commissary did not listen to him, but those who were his fellow-sufferers applauded him to the echo. The Commissary shrugged his shoulders at the hand-clappings.

"It is but right," he said to the reporters, "that the agents of the press should be admitted in preference to anyone else. Do you think that it is easy to discover a criminal? I have been a journalist, too. Yes, at times. In the Quartier, occasionally. I have even written a piece for the theater. But we will not talk of that. Enter! Enter, I beg of you—and we shall see"—and elegant, amiable, polished, smiling, he looked toward M. Bernardet, and his eyes asked the question: "Where is it?"

"Here! M. le Commissaire."

Bernardet stood respectfully in front of his superior officer, as a soldier carrying arms, and the Commissary, in his turn, approached the body, while the curious ones, quietly kept back by Moniche, formed a half circle around the pale and bloody corpse. The Commissary, like Bernardet, was struck by the haughty expression of that livid face.

"Poor man!" he said, shaking his head. "He is superb! superb! He reminds me of the dead Duke de Guise, in Paul Delaroche's picture. I have seen it also at Chantilly, in Gérôme's celebrated picture of *Le Duel de Pierrot.*"

Possibly in speaking aloud his thoughts, the Commissary was talking so that the reporters might hear him. They stood, notebooks in hand, taking notes, and Paul Rodier, catching the names, wrote rapidly in his book: "M. Desbrière, the learned Commissary, so artistic, so well disposed toward the press, was at one time a journalist. He noticed that the victim's pale face, with its strong personal characteristics, resembled the dead Duke de Guise, in Gérôme's celebrated picture, which hangs in the galleries at Chantilly."

IV

M. Desbriére now began the investigation. He questioned the porter and portress, while he studied the salon in detail. Bernardet roamed about, examining at very close range each and every object in the room, as a dog sniffs and scents about for a trail.

"What kind of a man was your lodger?" was the first question.

Moniche replied in a tone which showed that he felt that his tenant had been accused of something.

"Oh! M. le Commissaire, a very worthy man, I swear it!"

"The best man in the world," added his wife, wiping her eyes.

"I am not inquiring about his moral qualities," M. Desbrière said. "What I want to know is, how did he live and whom did he receive?"

"Few people. Very few," the porter answered. "The poor man liked solitude. He lived here eight years. He received a few friends, but, I repeat, a very small number."

M. Rovère had rented the apartment in 1888; he installed himself in his rooms, with his pictures and books. The porter was much astonished at the number of pictures and volumes which the new lodger brought. It took a long time to settle, as M. Rovère was very fastidious and personally superintended the hanging of his canvases and the placing of his books. He thought that he must have been an artist, although he said that he was a retired merchant. He had heard him say one day that he had been Consul to some foreign country—Spain or South America.

He lived quite simply, although they thought that he must be rich. Was he a miser? Not at all. Very generous, on the contrary. But, plainly, he shunned the world. He had chosen their apartment because it was in a retired spot, far from the Parisian boulevards. Four or five years before

a woman, clothed in black, had come there. A woman who seemed still young—he had not seen her face, which was covered with a heavy black veil—she had visited M. Rovère quite often. He always accompanied her respectfully to the door when she went away. Once or twice he had gone out with her in a carriage. No, he did not know her name. M. Rovère's life was regulated with military precision. He usually held himself upright—of late sickness had bowed him somewhat; he went out whenever he was able, going as far as the Bois and back. Then, after breakfasting, he shut himself up in his library and read and wrote. He passed nearly all of his evenings at home.

"He never made us wait up for him, as he never went to the theater," said Moniche.

The malady from which he suffered, and which puzzled the physicians, had seized him on his return from a summer sojourn at Aix-les-Bains for his health. The neighbors had at once noticed the effect produced by the cure. When he went away he had been somewhat troubled with rheumatism, but when he returned he was a confirmed sufferer. Since the beginning of September he had not been out, receiving no visits, except from his doctor, and spending whole days in his easy-chair or upon his lounge, while Mme. Moniche read the daily papers to him.

"When I say that he saw no one," said the porter, "I make a mistake. There was that gentleman——"

And he looked at his wife.

"What gentleman?"

Mme. Moniche shook her head, as if he ought not to answer.

"Of whom do you speak?" repeated the Commissary, looking at both of them.

At this moment, Bernardet, standing on the threshold of the library adjoining the salon, looked searchingly about the room in which M. Rovère ordinarily spent his time, and which he had probably left to meet his fate. His ear was as quick to hear as his eye to see, and as he heard the question he softly approached and listened for the answer.

"What gentleman? and what did he do?" asked the Commissary, a little brusquely, for he noticed a hesitation to reply in both Moniche and his wife.

"Well, and what does this mean?"

"Oh, well, M. le Commissaire, it is this—perhaps it means nothing," and the concierge went on to tell how one evening a very fine gentleman, and very polished, moreover, had come to the house and asked to see M. Rovère; he had gone to his apartment, and had remained a long time. It was, he thought, about the middle of October, and Mme. Moniche, who had gone upstairs to light the gas, met the man as he was coming out of M. Rovère's rooms, and had noticed at the first glance the troubled air of the individual (Moniche already called the gentleman *the "individual"*), who was very pale and whose eyes were red.

Then, at some time or other, the individual had made another visit to M. Rovère. More than once the portress had tried to learn his name. Up to this moment she had not succeeded. One day she asked M. Rovère who it was, and he very shortly asked her what business it was of hers. She did not insist, but she watched the individual with a vague doubt.

"Instinct. Monsieur, my instinct told me——"

"Enough," interrupted M. Desbrière; "if we had only instinct to guide us we should make some famous blunders."

"Oh, it was not only my instinct, Monsieur."

"Ah! ah! let us hear it——"

Bernardet, with his eyes fastened upon Mme. Moniche, did not lose a syllable of her story, which her husband occasionally interrupted to correct her or to complete a statement, or to add some detail. The corpse, with mouth open and fiery, ferocious eyes, seemed also to listen.

Mme. Moniche, as we already know, entered M. Rovère's apartment whenever she wished. She was his landlady, his reader, his friend. Rovère was brusque, but he was good. So it was nothing strange when the woman, urged by curiosity, suddenly appeared in his rooms, for him to say: "Ah, you here? Is that you? I did not call you." An electric

bell connected the rooms with the concierge lodge. Usually she would reply: "I thought I heard the bell." And she would profit by the occasion to fix up the fire, which M. Rovère, busy with his reading or writing, had forgotten to attend to. She was much attached to him. She did not wish to have him suffer from the cold, and recently had entered as often as possible, under one pretext or another, knowing that he was ill, and desiring to be at hand in case of need. When, one evening, about eight days before, she had entered the room while the visitor, whom Moniche called the individual, was there, the portress had been astonished to see the two men standing before Rovère's iron safe, the door wide open and both looking at some papers spread out on the desk.

Rovère, with his sallow, thin face, was holding some papers in his hand, and the other was bent over, looking with eager eyes at—Mme. Moniche had seen them well—some rent rolls, bills, and deeds. Perceiving Mme. Moniche, who stood hesitating on the threshold, M. Rovère frowned, mechanically making a move as if to gather up the scattered papers. But the portress said, "Pardon!" and quickly withdrew. Only—ah! only—she had time to see, to see plainly the iron safe, the heavy doors standing open, the keys hanging from the lock, and M. Rovère in his dressing-gown; the official papers, yellow and blue, others bearing seals and a ribbon, lying there before him. He seemed in a bad humor, but said nothing. Not a word.

"And the other one?"

The other man was as pale as M. Rovère. He resembled him, moreover. It was, perhaps, a relative. Mme. Moniche had noticed the expression with which he contemplated those papers and the fierce glance which he cast at her when she pushed open the door without knowing what sight awaited her. She had gone downstairs, but she did not at once tell her husband about what she had seen. It was some time afterward. The individual had come again. He remained closeted with M. Rovère for some hours. The sick man was lying on the lounge. The portress had heard

them through the door talking in low tones. She did not know what they said. She could hear only a murmur. And she had very good ears, too. But she heard only confused sounds, not one plain word. When, however, the visitor was going away she heard Rovère say to him: "I ought to have told all earlier."

Did the dead man possess a secret which weighed heavily upon him, and which he shared with that other? And the other? Who was he? Perhaps an accomplice. Everything she had said belonged to the Commissary of Police and to the press. She had told her story with omissions, with timorous looks, with sighs of doubt and useless gestures. Bernardet listened, noting each word; the purposes of this portress, the melodramatic gossip in certain information in which he verified the precision—all this was engraven on his brain, as earlier in the day the expression of the dead man's eyes had been reflected in the kodak.

He tried to distinguish, as best he could, the undeniable facts in this first deposition, when a woman of the people, garrulous, indiscreet, gossiping, and zealous, has the joy of playing a rôle. He mentally examined her story, with the interruptions which her husband made when she accused the individual. He stopped her with a look, placing his hand on her arm, and said: "One must wait! One does not know. He had the appearance of a worthy man also? And did it hinder him from coming to that?"

Over Bernardet's face a mocking little smile passed.

"He always had the appearance of a worthy man," he said, looking at the dead man, "and he even seemed like a worthy man who looked at rascals with courage. I am certain," slowly added the officer, "that if one could know the last thought in that brain which thinks no more, could see in those unseeing eyes the last image upon which they looked, one would learn all that need be known about that individual of whom you speak and the manner of his death."

"Possibly he killed himself," said the Commissary.

But the hypothesis of suicide was not possible, as Bernardet remarked to him, much to the great contempt of the

reporters who were covering their notebooks with a running handwriting and with hieroglyphics. The wound was too deep to have been made by the man's own hand. And, besides, they would not find the weapon with which that horrible gash had been made, near at hand. There was no weapon of any kind near the body. The murderer had either carried it away with him in his flight or he had thrown it away in some other part of the apartment. They would soon know.

They need not even wait for an autopsy to determine that it was an assassination. "That is evident," interrupted the Commissary; "the autopsy will be made, however."

And, with an insistence which surprised the Commissary a little, Bernardet, in courteous tones, evidently haunted by one particular idea, begged and almost supplicated M. Desbrière to send for the Attorney for the Republic, so that the corpse could be taken as soon as possible to the Morgue.

"Poor man!" exclaimed Mme. Moniche. "To the Morgue! To the Morgue!" Bernardet calmed her with a word.

"It is necessary. It is the law. Oh, M. le Commissaire, let us do it quickly, quickly! I will tell you why. Time will be gained—I mean to say, saved—and the criminal found."

Then, while M. Desbrière sent an officer to the telephone office to ask for the Attorney for the Republic to come as quickly as possible to the Boulevard de Clichy, Mme. Moniche freed her mind to the reporters in regard to some philosophical considerations upon human destiny, which condemned in so unforeseen, so odiously brutal a manner, a good lodger, as respectable as M. Rovère, to be laid upon a slab at the Morgue, like a thief or a vagabond—he who went out but seldom, and who "loved his home so much."

"The everlasting antithesis of life!" replied Paul Rodier, who made a note of his reflection.

V

Some time passed before the arrival of the Attorney, and through the closed Venetian blinds the murmurs of the crowd collected below could be heard. The Commissary wrote his report on the corner of a table, by the light of a single candle, and now and then asked for some detail of Bernardet, who seemed very impatient. A heavy silence had fallen on the room; those who a short time before had exchanged observations in loud tones, since the Commissary had finished with Mme. Moniche had dropped their voices and spoke in hushed tones, as if they were in a sick room. Suddenly a bell rang, sending shrill notes through the silent room. Bernardet remarked that no doubt the Attorney had arrived. He looked at his watch, a simple, silver Geneva watch, but which he prized highly—a present from his wife—and murmured:

"There is yet time." It was, in fact, the Attorney for the Republic, who came in, accompanied by the Examining Magistrate, M. Ginory, whom criminals called "the vise," because he pressed them so hard when he got hold of them. M. Ginory was in the Attorney's office when the officer had telephoned to M. Jacquelin des Audrays, and the latter had asked him to accompany him to the scene of the murder. Bernardet knew them both well. He had more than once been associated with M. Audrays. He also knew M. Ginory as a very just, a very good man, although he was much feared, for, while searching for the truth of a matter, he reserved judgment of those whom he had fastened in his vise. M. Audrays was still a young man, slender and correct, tightly buttoned up in his redingote, smooth-shaven, wearing eyeglasses.

The red ribbon in his buttonhole seemed a little too large like a rosette worn there through coquetry. M. Ginory, on the contrary, wore clothes too large for him; his necktie was tied as if it was a black cord; his hat was half brushed; he

was short, stout, and sanguine, with his little snub nose and his mouth with its heavy jaws. He seemed, beside the worldly magistrate, like a sort of professor, or savant, or collector, who, with a leather bag stuffed with books, seemed more fitted to pore over brochures or precious old volumes than to spend his time over musty law documents. Robust and active, with his fifty-five years, he entered that house of crime as an expert topographist makes a map, and who scarcely needs a guide, even in an unknown country. He went straight to the body, which, as we have said, lay between the two front windows, and both he and M. Audrays stood a moment looking at it, taking in, as had the others, all the details which might serve to guide them in their researches. The Attorney for the Republic asked the Commissary if he had made his report, and the latter handed it to him. He read it with satisfied nods of his head; during this time Bernardet had approached M. Ginory, saluted him, and asked for a private interview with a glance of his eye; the Examining Magistrate understood what he meant.

"Ah! Is it you, Bernardet? You wish to speak to me?"

"Yes, Monsieur Ginory. I beg of you to get the body to the dissecting room for the autopsy as soon as possible." He had quietly and almost imperceptibly drawn the Magistrate away toward a window, away from the reporters, who wished to hear every word that was uttered, where he had him quite by himself, in a corner of the room near the library door.

"There is an experiment which must be tried, Monsieur, and it ought to tempt a man like you," he said.

Bernardet knew very well that, painstaking even to a fault, taken with any new scientific discoveries, with a receptive mind, eager to study and to learn, M. Ginory would not refuse him any help which would aid justice. Had not the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences crowned, the year before, M. Ginory's book on "The Duties of a Magistrate to the Discoveries of Science"?

The word "experiment" was not said in order to frighten M. Ginory.

"What do you mean by that, Bernardet?" the Magistrate asked. Bernardet shook his head as if to intimate that the explanation was too long to give him there. They were not alone. Someone might hear them. And if a journal should publish the strange proposition which he wished to——"

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed the Examining Magistrate; "then it is something strange, your experiment?"

"Any magistrate but you would think it wild, unreasonable, or ridiculous, which is worse. But you—oh! I do not say it to flatter you, Monsieur," quickly added the police officer, seeing that the praise troubled this man, who always shrank from it. "I speak thus because it is the very truth, and anyone else would treat me as a crackbrain. But you—no!"

M. Ginory looked curiously at the little man, whose attitude was humble and even supplicating, and seemed to seek a favorable response, and whose eyes sparkled and indicated that his idea was no common one.

"What is that room there?" asked M. Ginory, pointing to the half-open library door.

"It is the study of M. Rovére—the victim——"

"Let us go in there," said M. Ginory.

In this room no one could hear them; they could speak freely. On entering, the Examining Magistrate mechanically cast his eye over the books, stopping at such and such a title of a rare work, and, seating himself in a low, easy-chair, covered with Caramanie, he made a sign to the police officer to speak. Bernardet stood, hat in hand, in front of him.

"M. le Juge," Bernardet began, "I beg your pardon for asking you to grant me an interview. But, allowing for the difference in our positions, which is very great, I am, like you, a scholar; very curious. I shall never belong to the Institute, and you will——"

"Go on, Bernardet."

"And you will belong to it, M. Ginory, but I strive also, in my lower sphere, to keep myself *au courant* with all that is said and with all that is written. I was in the service of

the Academy when your beautiful work was crowned, and when the perpetual secretary spoke of those magistrates who knew how to unite the love of letters with a study of justice; I thought that lower down, much lower down on the ladder, M. le Juge, he might have also searched for and found some men who studied to learn and to do their best in doing their duty."

"Ah! I know you, Bernardet. Your chief has often spoken of you."

"I know that M. Leriche is very good to me. But it is not for me to boast of that. I wish only to inspire confidence in you, because what I wish to say to you is so strange—so very strange——"

Bernardet suddenly stopped. "I know," he began, "that if I were to say to a physician what I am about to say to you he would think I ought to be shut up in Sainte-Anne. And yet I am not crazy, I beg of you to believe. No! but I have searched and searched. It seems to me that there is a mass of inventions, of discoveries, which we police officers ought to make use of. And, although I am a sub-inspector——"

"Go on! Go on!" said the Magistrate quickly, with a movement of the head toward the open door of the salon, where the Attorney for the Republic was conducting the investigation, and his nod seemed to say: "They are at work in there—let us make haste."

"I will be as brief as possible," said Bernardet, who understood what he meant.

"Monsieur" (and his tone became rapid, precise, running up and down like a ball), "thirty years, or, rather, to be exact, thirty-six years ago, some American journals, not political, but scientific, published the fact that the daguerreotype—we have made long strides since then in photography—had permitted them to find in the retina of a murdered man's eye the image of the one who struck him."

"Yes, I know," said M. Ginory.

"In 1860, I was too young, and I had no desire to prove the truth of this discovery. I adore photography as I adore

my profession. I pass my leisure hours in taking instantaneous pictures, in developing them, printing, and finishing them. The idea of what I am about to propose to you came to me by chance. I bought upon one of the quays a volume of the Société de Médecine Légale of 1869, in which Dr. Vernois gives an account of a communication sent to the society by a physician, who also sent photographic proofs, thus indorsed: 'Photographs taken of the retina of a woman assassinated the 14th of June, 1848.'"

"Yes," again said M. Ginory. "It was a communication from Dr. Bourion, of Darnez."

"Precisely."

"And the proof sent by the doctor showed the instant when, after striking the mother, the assassin killed the child, while the dog sprang toward the little carriage in which the little one lay."

"Yes, Monsieur Ginory."

"Oh, well, but my poor Bernardet, Dr. Vernois, since you have read this report——"

"By chance, Monsieur, I found it on a bookstall and it has kept running in my head ever since, over and over and over again."

"Dr. Vernois, my poor fellow, made many experiments. At first the proof sent was so confused, so hazy, that no one who had not seen what Bourion had written could have told what it was. If Vernois, who was a very scientific man, could find nothing—nothing, I repeat—which justified Dr. Bourion's declarations, what do you expect that anyone else could make of those researches? Do not talk any more, or even think any more, about it."

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur Ginory; one can and ought to think about it. In any case, I am thinking about it."

A smile of doubt crossed M. Ginory's lips. Bernardet quickly added: "Photography of the invisible has been proven. Are not the Roentgen Rays, the famous X-Rays, as incredible as that photography can find the image of a murderer on the retina of a dead person's eye? They invent

some foolish things, those Americans, but they often presage the truth. Do they not catch by photography the last sighs of the dying? Do they not fix upon the film or on plates that mysterious thing which haunts us, the occult? They throw bridges across unknown abysses as over great bodies of water or from one precipice to another, and they reach the other side. I beg your pardon, Monsieur," and the police officer stopped short in his enthusiastic defense, as he caught sight of M. Ginory's astonished face; "I seem to have been making a speech, a thing I detest."

"Why do you say that to me? Because I looked astonished at what you have told me? I am not only surprised, I am charmed. Go on! Go on!"

"Oh, well! what seemed folly yesterday will be an established fact to-morrow. A fact is a fact. Dr. Vernois had better have tested again and again his contradictory experiments. Dr. Bourion's experiments had preceded his own. If Dr. Vernois saw nothing in the picture taken of the retina of the eye of the woman assassinated June 14, 1868, I have seen something—yes, I have seen with a magnifying glass, while studying thoroughly the proof given to the society and reproduced in the bulletin of Volume I., No. 2, of 1870; I have seen deciphered the image which Dr. Bourion saw, and which Dr. Vernois did not see. Ah! it was confused, the proof was hazy. It was scarcely recognizable, I confess. But there are mirrors which are not very clear and which reflect clouded vision; nevertheless, the image is there. And I have seen, or what one calls seen, the phantom of the murderer which Dr. Bourion saw, and which escaped the eyes of the member of the Academy of Medicine and of the Hygiene Council, Honorary Physician of the Hospital, if you please."

M. Ginory, who had listened to the officer with curiosity, began to laugh, and remarked to Bernardet that, according to this reasoning, illustrated medical science would find itself sacrificed to the instinct, the divination of a provincial physician, and that it was only too easy to put the

Academicians in the wrong and the Independents in the right.

"Oh, Monsieur, pardon; I put no one in the right or wrong. Dr. Bourion believed that he had made a discovery. Dr. Vernois was persuaded that Dr. Bourion had discovered nothing at all. Each had the courage of his conviction. What I contend is that, for twenty-six years, no one has experimented, no one has made any researches, since the first experiment, and that Dr. Bourion's communication has been simply dropped and forgotten."

"I ask your pardon in my turn, Bernardet," replied M. Ginory, a little quizzically. "I have also studied the question, which seems to me a curious——"

"Have you photographed any yourself, M. Ginory?"

"No."

"Ah! There is where the proof is."

"But in 1877, the very learned Doyen of the Academy of Medicine, M. Brouardel, whose great wisdom and whose sovereign opinion was law, one of those men who is an honor to his country, told me that when he was in Heidelberg he had heard Professor Kuhne say that he had studied this same question; he had made impressions of the retina of the eye in the following cases: After the death of a dog or a wolf, he had taken out the eye and replaced it with the back part of the eye in front; then he took a very strong light and placed it in front of the eye and between the eye and the light he placed a small grating. This grating, after an exposure of a quarter of an hour, was visible upon the retina. But those are very different experiments from the ones one hears of in America."

"They could see the bars in the grating? If that was visible, why could not the visage of the murderer be found there?"

"Eh! Other experiments have been attempted, even after those of which Professor Kuhne told our compatriot. Everyone, you understand, has borne only negative results, and M. Brouardel could tell you, better than I, that in the physiological and oculist treatises, published during the

last ten years, no allusion has been made to the preservation of the image on the retina after death. It is an *affaire classé,* Bernardet."

"Ah! Monsieur, yet"—and the police officer hesitated. Shaking his head, he again repeated: "Yet—yet!"

"You are not convinced?"

"No, Monsieur Ginory, and shall I tell you why? You, yourself, in spite of the testimony of illustrious savants, still doubt. I pray you to pardon me, but I see it in your eyes."

"That is still another way to use the retina," said Ginory, laughing. "You read one's thoughts."

"No, Monsieur, but you are a man of too great intelligence to say to yourself that there is anything in this world *classé,* that every matter can be taken up again. The idea has come to me to try the experiment if I am permitted. Yes, Monsieur, those eyes, did you see them, the eyes of the dead man? They seemed to speak; they seemed to see. Their expression is of lifelike intensity. They see, I tell you, they see! They perceive something which we cannot see, and which is frightful. They bear—and no one can convince me to the contrary—they bear on the retina the reflection of the last being whom the murdered man saw before he died. They keep it still, they still retain that image. They are going to hold an autopsy; they will tell us that the throat is cut. Eh! *parbleu*! We know it well. We see it for ourselves. Moniche, the porter, knows it as well as any doctor. But when one questions those eyes, when one searches in that black chamber where the image appears as on a plate, when one demands of those eyes their secret, I am convinced that one will find it."

"You are obstinate, Bernardet."

"Yes, very obstinate, Monsieur Ginory, and very patient. The pictures which I took with my kodak will give us the expression, the interior, so to speak; those which we would take of the retina would reveal to us the secret of the agony. And, moreover, unless I deceive myself, what danger attends such an experiment? One opens the poor eyes, and

that is sinister, certainly, but when one holds an autopsy at the Morgue, when one enlarges the gash in the throat in order to study it, when one dissects the body, is it any more respectful or proper? Ah! Monsieur, if I but had your power——"

M. Ginory seemed quite struck with all that the police officer had said to him, but while he still held to his convictions, he did not seem quite averse to trying the experiment. Who can say to science "Halt!" and impose upon it limits which cannot be passed? No one!

"We will see, Bernardet."

And in that "we will see" there was already a half promise.

"Ah! if you only will, and what would it cost you?" added Bernardet, still urgent; indeed, almost suppliant.

"Let us finish this now. They are waiting for me," said the Examining Magistrate.

As he left M. Rovère's study, he instinctively cast a glance at the rare volumes, with their costly bindings, and he reëntered the salon where M. Jacquelin des Audrays had, without doubt, finished his examination.

VI

The attorney for the Republic called in the Examining Magistrate. Nothing more was to be done. The Magistrate had studied the position of the corpse, examined the wound, and now, having told M. Ginory his impressions, he did not hide from him his belief that the crime had been committed by a professional, as the stroke of the knife across the throat had been given neatly, scientifically, according to all the established rules.

"One might well take it for the work of a professional butcher."

"Yes, without doubt, M. Ginory; but one does not know. Brute force—a strong blow—can produce exactly what science can."

More agitated than he wished to appear by the strange conversation between the Agent of Sureté and himself, the Examining Magistrate stood at the foot of the corpse and gazed with a fixity almost fierce, not at the gaping wound of which M. Jacquelin des Audrays had spoken to him, but at those eyes,—those fixed eyes, those eyes which no opacity had yet invaded, which, open, frightful, seemingly burning with anger, menacing, full of accusation of some sort and animated with vengeance, gave him a look, immovable, most powerful.

It was true! it was true! They lived! those eyes spoke. They cried to him for justice. They retained the expression of some atrocious vision; the expression of violent rage. They menaced someone—who? If the picture of someone was graven there, was it not the last image reflected on the little mirror of the retina? What if a face was reflected there! What if it was still retained in the depths of those wide-open eyes! That strange creature, Bernardet, half crazy, enthused with new ideas, with the mysteries which traverse chimerical brains, troubled him—Ginory, a man of statistics and of facts.

But truly those dead eyes seemed to appeal, to speak, to designate someone. What more eloquent, what more terrible witness could there be than the dead man himself, if it was possible for his eyes to speak; if that organ of life should contain, shut up within it, preserved, the secret of death? Bernardet, whose eyes never left the Magistrate's face, ought to have been content, for it plainly expressed doubt, a hesitation, and the police officer heard him cursing under his breath.

"Folly! Stupidity! Bah! we shall see!"

Bernardet was filled with hope. M. Ginory, the Examining Magistrate, was, moreover, convinced that, for the present, and the sooner the better, the corpse should be sent to the Morgue. There only could a thorough and scientific examination be made. The reporter listened intently to the conversation, and Mme. Moniche clasped her hands, more and more agonized by that word Morgue, which, among the

people, produces the same terror that that other word,—which means, however, careful attendance, scientific treatment, and safety—Hospital, does.

Nothing was now to be done except to question some of the neighbors and to take a sketch of the salon. Bernardet said to the Magistrate: "My photograph will give you that!" While someone went out to get a hearse, the Magistrates went away, the police officer placed a guard in front of the house. The crowd was constantly increasing and becoming more and more curious, violently excited and eager to see the spectacle—the murdered man borne from his home.

Bernardet did not allow M. Ginory to go away without asking respectfully if he would be allowed to photograph the dead man's eye. Without giving him a formal answer, M. Ginory simply told him to be present at the autopsy at the Morgue. Evidently if the Magistrate had not been already full of doubt, his reply would have been different. Why did that inferior officer have the audacity to give his opinion on the subject of conducting a judicial investigation?

M. Ginory would long before this have sent him about his business if he had not become suddenly interested in him. In his quality of Judge he had come to know Bernardet's history and his exploits in the service. No more capable man, in his line, could be found. He was perfectly and utterly devoted to his profession. Some strange tales were told of his methods. It was he who once passed an entire night on a bench, pretending intoxication, in order to gain sufficient information to enable him to arrest a murderer in the morning in a wretched hovel at La Vilette—a murderer armed to the teeth. It was Bernardet who without arms—as all those agents—caught the famous bandit, the noted Taureau de la Glacière, a foreign Hercules, who had strangled his mistress. Bernardet arrested him by holding to his temple the cold neck of a bottle and saying, "Hands up or I fire!" Now what the bandit took for the cold muzzle of a pistol was a vial containing

some medicine which Bernardet had purchased of a pharmacist for his liver.

Deeds of valor against thieves, malefactors, and insurrectionists abounded in Bernardet's life; and M. Ginory had just discovered in this man, whom he believed simply endowed with the activity and keenness of a hunting dog, an intelligence singularly watchful, deep, and complicated. Bernardet, who had nothing more to do until the body should be taken to the Morgue, left the house directly after the Magistrates.

"Where are you going?" asked Paul Rodier, the reporter.

"Home. A few steps from here."

"May I go along with you?" asked the journalist.

"To find an occasion to make me speak? But I know nothing! I suspect nothing; I shall say nothing!"

"Do you believe that it is the work of a thief, or revenge?"

"I am very certain that it was no thief. Nothing in the apartment was touched. As for the rest, who knows?"

"M. Bernardet," laughingly said the reporter, as he walked along by the officer's side, "you do not wish to speak."

"What good will that do?" Bernardet replied, also laughingly; "it will not prevent you from publishing an interview."

"You think so. *Au revoir!* I must hurry and make my copy. And you?"

"I? A photograph."

They separated, and Bernardet entered his house. His daughters had grieved over his sudden departure on Sunday on his fête day. They met him with joyous shouts when he appeared, and threw themselves upon him. "Papa! Here is papa!"

Mme. Bernardet was also happy. They could go then to the garden and finish the picture. But their joy subsided, night had fallen, and Bernardet, preoccupied, wished

to shut himself up so that he might reflect on all that had happened, and perhaps to work a little, even to-day.

"It is thy fête day, Bernardet. Wilt thou not rest to-day?"

"I can rest at dinner, dear. Until then, I must use the time reading over a mass of evidence."

"Then thou wilt need a lamp?" asked Mme. Bernardet.

"Yes, my dear; light the lamp."

Next to their bedchamber M. Bernadet had fitted up a little room for his private use. It was a tiny den, in which was a mahogany table loaded with books and papers, and at which he worked when he had time, reading, annotating, copying from the papers, and collecting extracts for hours at a time. No one was allowed to enter this room, filled with old papers. Mme. Bernardet well called it "a nest of microbes." Bernardet found pleasure in this sporadic place, which in summer was stifling. In winter he worked without a fire.

Mme. Bernardet was unhappy as she saw that their holiday was spoiled. But she very well knew that when her husband was devoured with curiosity, carried away by a desire to elucidate a puzzle, there was nothing to be said. He listened to no remonstrances, and the daughters knew that when they asked if their father was not coming to renew his games with them they were obliged to content themselves with the excuse which they knew so well from having heard it so often: "Papa is studying out a crime!"

Bernardet was anxious to read over his notes, the verification of his hopes, of those so-called certainties of to-day. That is why he wished to be alone. As soon as he had closed the door he at once, from among the enormous piles of dust-laden books and files of old newspapers, with the unerring instinct of the habitual searcher who rummages through bookstalls, drew forth a gray-covered pamphlet in which he had read, with feverish astonishment, the experiments and report of Dr. Vernois upon the application of photography in criminal researches. He quickly seated himself, and with trembling fingers eagerly turned over the

leaves of the book so often read and studied, and came to the report of the member of the Academy of Medicine; he compared it with the proof submitted by Dr. Bourion, of the Medical Society, in which it was stated that the most learned savants had seen nothing.

"Seen nothing, or wished to see nothing, perhaps!" he murmured.

The night fell upon the photograph which had been sent a long time before, to the Society, and Bernardet set himself to study out the old crime with the most careful attention; with the passion of a paleographer deciphering a palimpsest. This poor devil of a police officer, in his ardent desire to solve the vexing problem, brought to it the same ardor and the same faith as a bibliophile. He went over and over with the method of an Examining Magistrate all that old forgotten affair, and in the solitude and silence of his little room the last reflections of the setting sun falling on his papers and making pale the light of his lamp, he set himself the task of solving, like a mathematical problem, that question which he had studied, but which he wished to know from the very beginning, without any doubts, before seeing M. Ginory again at the Morgue, beside the body of M. Rovère. He took his pamphlet and read: "The photograph sent to the Society of Medical Jurisprudence by Dr. Bourion taken upon the retina of the eye of a woman who had been murdered the 14th of June, 1868, represents the moment when the assassin, after having struck the mother, kills the infant, and the dog belonging to the house leaps toward the unfortunate little victim to save it."

Then studying, turn by turn, the photograph yellowed by time, and the article which described it, Bernardet satisfied himself, and learned the history by heart.

M. Gallard, General Secretary of the Society, after having carefully hidden the back part of the photograph, had circulated it about among the members with this note: "Enigma of Medical Jurisprudence." And no one had solved the tragic enigma. Even when he had explained, no one could see in the photograph what Dr. Bourion saw

there. Some were able on examining that strange picture to see in the black and white haze some figures as singular and dissimilar as those which the amiable Polonius perceived in the clouds under the suggestion of Hamlet.

Dr. Vernois, appointed to write a report on Dr. Bourion's communication, asked him then how the operation had been conducted, and Dr. Bourion had given him these details, which Bernardet was now reading and studying: The assassination had taken place on Sunday between noon and four o'clock; the extraction of the eyes from their orbits had not been made until the following day at six o'clock in the evening.

The experiment on the eyes, those terribly accusing eyes of this dead man, could be made twenty-four hours earlier than that other experiment. The image—if there was any image—ought to be, in consequence, more clearly defined than in Dr. Bourion's experiment.

"About six o'clock in the evening," thought Bernardet, "and the photographic light was sufficient."

Dr. Bourion had taken pictures of both of the child's eyes as well as both of the mother's eyes. The child's eyes showed nothing but hazy clouds. But the mother's eyes were different. Upon the left eye, next to a circular section back of the iris, a delicately marked image of a dog's head appeared. On the same section of the right eye, another picture; one could see the assassin raising his arm to strike and the dog leaping to protect his little charge.

"With much good will, it must be confessed," thought Bernardet, looking again and again at the photograph, "and with much imagination, too. But it was between fifty and fifty-two hours after the murder that the proof was taken, while this time it will be while the body is still warm that the experiment will be tried."

Seventeen times already had Dr. Vernois experimented on animals; sometimes just after he had strangled them, again when they had died from Prussic acid. He had held in front of their eyes a simple object which could be easily recognized. He had taken out the eyes and hurried with

them to the photographer. He had, in order to better expose the retina to photographic action, made a sort of Maltese cross, by making four incisions on the edge of the sclerotic. He removed the vitreous humor, fixed it on a piece of card with four pins and submitted the retina as quickly as possible to the camera.

In re-reading the learned man's report, Bernardet studied, pored over, carefully scrutinized the text, investigated the dozen proofs submitted to the Society of Medical Jurisprudence by Dr. Vernois:

Retina of a cat's eye killed by Prussic acid; Vernois had held the animal in front of the bars of the cage in which it was confined. No result!

Retina of a strangled dog's eye. A watch was held in front of its eyes. No result!

Retina of a dog killed by strangulation. A bunch of shining keys was held in front of his eyes. No result!

Retina of the eye of a strangled dog. An eye-glass held in front of its eyes. Photograph made two hours after death. Nothing!

In all Dr. Vernois' experiments—nothing! Nothing!

Bernardet repeated the word angrily. Still he kept on; he read page after page. But all this was twenty-six years ago—photography has made great strides since then. What wonderful results have been obtained! The skeleton of the human body seen through the flesh! The instantaneous photograph! The kinetoscopic views! Man's voice registered for eternity in the phonograph! The mysterious dragged forth into the light of day. Many hitherto unknown secrets become common property! The invisible, even the invisible, the occult, placed before our eyes, as a spectacle!

"One does not know all that may be done with a kodak," murmured Bernardet.

As he ascertained, in re-reading Dr. Vernois' report on "The Application of Photography to Medical Jurisprudence," the savant himself, even while denying the results of which Dr. Bourion spoke in his communication, devoted

himself to a general consideration upon the rôle which photography ought to play in medical jurisprudence. Yes, in 1869, he asked that in the researches on poisonous substances, where the microscope alone had been used, photography should be applied. He advocated what in our day is so common, the photographing of the features of criminals, their deformities, their scars, their tattooings. He demanded that pictures should be taken of an accused person in many ways, without wigs and with them, with and without beards, in diverse costumes.

"These propositions," thought Bernardet, "seem hardly new; it is twenty-six years since they were discovered, and now they seem as natural as that two and two make four. In twenty-six years from now, who knows what science will have done?

"Vernois demanded that wounds be reproduced, their size, the instruments with which the crime was committed, the leaves of plants in certain cases of poisoning, the shape of the victim's garments, the prints of their hands and feet, the interior view of their rooms, the signature of certain accused affected with nervous disorders, parts of bodies and of bones, and, in fact, everything in any way connected with the crime. It was said that he asked too much. Did he expect judges to make photographs? To-day, everything that Vernois demanded in 1869, has been done, and, in truth, the instantaneous photograph has almost superseded the minutes of an investigation.

"We photograph a spurious banknote. It is magnified, and, by the absence of a tiny dot the proof of the alteration is found. On account of the lack of a dot the forger is detected. The savant, Helmholtz, was the discoverer of this method of detecting these faults. Two banknotes, one authentic, the other a forgery, were placed side by side in a stereoscope of strong magnifying power, when the faults were at once detected. Helmholtz's experiment probably seemed fantastic to the forger condemned by a stereoscope. Oh, well, to-day ought not a like experiment on the retina of a dead man's eye give a like result?

"Instruments have been highly perfected since the time when Dr. Bourion made his experiments, and if the law of human physiology has not changed, the seekers of invisible causes must have rapidly advanced in their mysterious pursuits. Who knows whether, at the instant of the last agony, the dying person does not put all the intensity of life into the retina, giving a hundredfold power to that last supreme look?"

At this point of his reflections Bernardet experienced some hesitation. While he was not thoroughly acquainted with physiology and philosophy, yet he had seen so much, so many things; had known so many strange occurrences, and had studied many of them. He knew—for he had closely questioned wretches who had been saved from drowning at the very last possible moment, some of whom had attempted suicide, others who had been almost drowned through accident, and each one had told him that his whole life, from his earliest recollection, had flashed through his mind in the instant of mortal agony. Yes, a whole lifetime in one instant of cerebral excitement!

Had savants been able to solve this wonderful mystery? The *résumé* of an existence in one vibration! Was it possible? Yes—Bernardet still used the word.

And why, in an analogous sensation, could not the look of a dying man be seized in an intensity lasting an instant, as memory brought in a single flash so many diverse remembrances?

"I know, since it is the imagination, that the dead cannot see, while the image on the retina is a fact, a fact contradicted by wiser men than I." Bernardet thought on these mysteries until his head began to ache.

"I shall make myself ill over it," he thought. "And there is something to be done."

Then in his dusty little room, his brain over-excited, he became enthused with one idea. His surroundings fell away from him, he saw nothing—everything disappeared—the books, the papers, the walls, the visible objects, as did also the objections, the denials, the demonstrated impossibilities.

And absolute conviction seized him to the exclusion of all extraneous surroundings. This conviction was absolute, instinctive, irresistible, powerful, filling him with entire faith.

"This unknown thing I will find. What is to be done I will do," he declared to himself.

He threw the pamphlet on the table, arose from his chair and descended to the dining-room, where his wife and children were waiting for him. He rubbed his hands with glee, and his face looked joyous.

"Didst thou discover the trail?" Mme. Bernardet asked very simply, as a working woman would ask her husband if he had had a good day. The eldest of the little girls rushed toward him.

"Papa, my dear little papa!"

"My darling!"

The child asked her father in a sweet voice: "Art thou satisfied with thy crime, papa?"

"We will not talk about that," Bernardet replied. "To table! After dinner I will develop the pictures which I have taken with my kodak, but let us amuse ourselves now; it is my fête day; I wish to forget all about business. Let us dine now and be as happy as possible."

VII

The murder of M. Rovère, committed in broad daylight, in a quarter of Paris filled with life and movement, caused a widespread sensation. There was so much mystery mixed in the affair. What could be ascertained about the dead man's life was very dramatically written up by Paul Rodier in a sketch, and this, republished everywhere and enlarged upon, soon gave to the crime of the Boulevard de Clichy the interest of a judicial romance. All that there was of vulgar curiosity in man awoke, an atavistic bestiality at the smell of blood.

What was this M. Rovère, former Consul to Buenos

Ayres or Havana, amateur collector of objects of virtu, member of the Society of Bibliophiles, where he had not been seen for a long time? What enemy had entered his room for the purpose of cutting his throat? Might he not have been assassinated by some thief who knew that his rooms contained a collection of works of art? The fête at Montmartre was often in full blast in front of the house where the murder had been committed, and among the crowd of ex-prison birds and malefactors who are always attendant upon foreign kirmesses might not some one of them have returned and committed the crime? The papers took advantage of the occasion to moralize upon permitting these fêtes to be held in the outlying boulevards, where vice and crime seemed to spring spontaneously from the soil.

But no one, not one journal—perhaps by order—spoke of that unknown visitor whom Moniche called *the individual,* and whom the portress had seen standing beside M. Rovère in front of the open safe. Paul Rodier in his sketch scarcely referred to the fact that justice had a clew important enough to penetrate the mystery of the crime, and in the end arrest the murderer. And the readers, while awaiting developments, asked what mystery was hidden in this murder. Moniche at times wore a frightened yet important air. He felt that he was an object of curiosity to many, the center of prejudices. The porter and his wife possessed a terrible secret. They were raised in their own estimation.

"We shall appear at the trial," said Moniche, seeing himself already before the red robes, and holding up his hand to swear that he would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

And as they sat together in their little lodge they talked the matter over and over, and brought up every incident in M. Rovère's life which might have a bearing on the case.

"Do you remember the young man who came one day and insisted on seeing M. le Consul?"

"Ah! Very well, indeed," said Moniche. "I had forgotten that one. A felt hat, his face bronzed, and a droll

accent. He had come from away off somewhere. He was probably a Spaniard."

"Some beggar, likely. A poor devil whom the Consul had known in America, in the Colonies, one knows not where."

"A bad face!" said Moniche. "M. Rovère received him, however, and gave him aid, I remember. If the young man had come often, I should think that he struck the blow. And also, I ought to add, if there was not the other."

"Yes, but there is the other," his wife replied. "There is the one whom I saw standing in front of the coupons, and who was looking at those other papers with flashing eyes, I give my word. There is that one, Moniche, and I am willing to put my hand into the fire and yours, too, Moniche, if it is not he."

"If he is the one, he will be found."

"Oh! but if he has disappeared? One disappears very quickly in these days."

"We shall see! we shall see! Justice reigns, and we are here!" He said that "we are here!" as a grenadier of the guard before an important engagement.

They had taken the body to the Morgue. At the hour fixed for the autopsy Bernardet arrived. He seemed much excited, and asked M. Ginory if, since their conversation in M. Rovère's library, he had reflected and decided to permit him to make the experiment—the famous experiment reported for so many years as useless, absurd, almost ridiculous.

"With anyone but M. Ginory I should not dare to hope," thought the police officer, "but he does not sneer at strange discoveries."

He had brought his photographic apparatus, that kodak which he declared was more dangerous to the criminal than a loaded weapon. He had developed the negatives which he had taken, and of the three, two had come out in good condition. The face of the murdered man appeared with a clearness which, in the proofs, rendered it formidable as

in the reality; and the eyes, those tragic, living eyes, retained their terrible, accusing expression which the supreme agony had left in them. The light had struck full on the eyes—and they spoke. Bernardet showed the proofs to M. Ginory. They examined them with a magnifying glass, but they showed only the emotion, the agony, the anger of that last moment. Bernardet hoped to convince M. Ginory that Bourion's experiment was not a failure.

Eleven o'clock was the hour named for the autopsy. Twenty minutes before, Bernardet was at the Morgue. He walked restlessly about outside among the spectators—some were women, young girls, students, and children who were hovering about the place, hoping that some chance would permit them to satisfy their morbid curiosity and to enter and gaze on those slabs whereon lay—swollen, livid, disfigured—the bodies.

Never, perhaps, in his life had the police officer been so strongly moved with a desire to succeed. He brought to his tragic task all the ardor of an apostle. It was not the idea of success, the renown, or the possibility of advancement which urged him on; it was the joy, the glory of aiding progress, of attaching his name to a new discovery. He worked for art and the love of art. As he wandered about, his sole thought was of his desire to test Dr. Bourion's experiment; of the realization of his dream. "Ah! if M. Ginory will only permit it," he thought.

As he formulated that hope in his mind, he saw M. Ginory descend from the fiacre; he hurried up to him and saluted him respectfully. Seeing Bernardet so moved and the first one on the spot, he could not repress a smile.

"I see you are still enthused."

"I have thought of nothing else all night, Monsieur Ginory."

"Well, but," said M. Ginory in a tone which seemed to Bernardet to imply hope, "no idea must be rejected, and I do not see why we should not try the experiment. I have reflected upon it. Where is the unsuitableness?"

"Ah, Monsieur le Juge," cried the agent, "if you per-

mit it who knows but that we may revolutionize medical jurisprudence?"

"Revolutionize, revolutionize!" Would the Examining Magistrate yet find it an idiotic idea?

M. Ginory passed around the building and entered by a small door opening on the Seine. The registrar followed him, and behind him came the police agent. Bernardet wished to wait until the doctors delegated to perform the autopsy should arrive, and the head keeper of the Morgue advised him to possess himself with patience, and while he was waiting to look around and see the latest cadavers which had been brought there.

"We have had, in eight days, a larger number of women than men, which is rare. And these women were nearly all habitués of the public halls and race tracks."

"And how can you tell that?"

"Because they have pretty feet."

Professor Morin arrived with a confrère, a young Pasteurian doctor, with a singular mind, broad and receptive, and who passed among his companions for a man fond of chimeras, a little retiring, however, and given over to making experiments and to vague dreams. M. Morin saluted M. Ginory and presented to him the young doctor, Erwin by name, and said to the Magistrate that the house students had probably begun the autopsy to gain time.

The body, stripped of its clothing, lay upon the dissecting table, and three young men, in velvet skullcaps, with aprons tied about their waists, were standing about the corpse; they had already begun the autopsy. The mortal wound looked redder than ever in the whiteness of the naked body.

Bernardet glided into the room, trying to keep out of sight, listening and looking, and, above everything, not losing sight of M. Ginory's face. A face in which the look was keen, penetrating, sharp as a knife, as he bent over the pale face of the murdered man, regarding it as searchingly as the surgeons' scalpels were searching the wound and the flesh. Among those men in their black clothes, some with bared heads, in order to work better; others with hats on,

the stretched-out corpse seemed like a wax figure upon a marble slab. Bernardet thought of those images which he had seen copied from Rembrandt's pictures—the poet with the anatomical pincers, and the shambles. The surgeons bent over the body, their hands busy and their scissors cutting the muscles. That wound, which had let out his life, that large wound, like a monstrous and grimacing mouth, they enlarged still more; the head oscillated from side to side, and they were obliged to prop it with some mats. The eyes remained the same, and, in spite of the hours which had passed, seemed as living, as menacing and eloquent as the night before; they were, however, veiled with something vitreous over the pupils, like the amaurosis of death, yet full of that anger, of that fright, of that ferocious malediction which was reproduced in a startling manner in the negatives taken by Bernardet.

"The secret of the crime is in that look," thought the police agent. "Those eyes see, those eyes speak; they tell what they know, they accuse someone."

Then, while the professor, his associates, and his students went on with the autopsy, exchanging observations, following in the mutilated body their researches for the truth, trying to be very accurate as to the nature of the wound, the form even of the knife with which it was made, Bernardet softly approached the Examining Magistrate and in a low tone, timidly, respectfully, he spoke some words, which were insistent, however, and pressing, urging the Magistrate to quickly interfere.

"Ah! M. le Juge, this is the moment; you who can do everything——"

The Examining Magistrate has, with us, absolute power. He does whatever seems to him best. And he wishes to do a thing, because he wishes to do it. M. Ginory, curious by nature and because it was his duty, hesitated, scratched his ear, rubbed his nose, bit his lips, listened to the supplicating murmur of the police officer; but decided not to speak just then, and continued gazing with a fixed stare at the dead man.

This thought came to him, moreover, insistent and imperious, that he was there to testify in all things in favor of that truth the discovery of which was imposed upon him—and suddenly his sharp voice interrupted the surgeons' work.

"Messieurs, does not the expression of the open eyes strike you?"

"Yes; they express admirably the most perfect agony," M. Morin replied.

"And does it not seem," asked the Examining Magistrate, "as if they were fixed with that expression on the murderer?"

"Without doubt! The mouth seems to curse and the eyes to menace."

"And what if the last image seen, in fact, that of the murderer, still remains upon the retina of the eyes?"

M. Morin looked at the Magistrate in astonishment; his air was slightly mocking and the lips and eyes assumed a quizzical expression. But Bernardet was very much surprised when he heard one remark. Dr. Erwin raised his head and while he seemed to approve of that which M. Ginory had advanced, he said: "That image must have disappeared from the retina some time ago."

"Who knows?" said M. Ginory.

Bernardet experienced a profound emotion. He felt that this time the problem would be officially settled. M. Ginory had not feared ridicule when he spoke, and a discussion arose there, in that dissecting room, in the presence of the corpse. What had existed only in a dream, in Bernardet's little study, became here, in the presence of the Examining Magistrate, a member of the Institute, and the young students, almost full-fledged doctors, a question frankly discussed in all its bearings. And it was he, standing back, he, a poor devil of a police officer, who had urged this Examining Magistrate to question this savant.

"At the back of the eyes," said the Professor, touching the eyes with his scalpel, "there is nothing, believe me. It is elsewhere that you must look for your proof."

"But"—and M. Ginory repeated his "who knows?"—

"What if we try it this time; will it inconvenience you, my dear Master?" M. Morin made a movement with his lips which meant *peuh!* and his whole countenance expressed his scorn. "But I see no inconvenience." At the end of a moment he said in a sharp tone: "It will be lost time."

"A little more, a little less," replied M. Ginory, "the experiment is worth the trouble to make it."

M. Ginory had proved without doubt that he, like Bernardet, wished to satisfy his curiosity, and in looking at the open eyes of the corpse, although in his duties he never allowed himself to be influenced by the sentimental or the dramatic, yet it seemed to him that those eyes urged him to insist, nay, even supplicated him.

"I know, I know," said M. Morin, "what you dream of in your magistrate's brain is as amusing as a tale of Edgar Poe's. But to find in those eyes the image of the murderer —come now, leave that to the inventive genius of a Rudyard Kipling, but do not mix the impossible with our researches in medical jurisprudence. Let us not make romance; let us make, you the examinations and I the dissection."

The short tone in which the Professor had spoken did not exactly please M. Ginory, who now, a little through self-conceit (since he had made the proposition), a little through curiosity, decided that he would not beat a retreat. "Is there anything to risk?" he asked. "And it might be one chance in a thousand."

"But there is no chance," quickly answered M. Morin. "None—none!"

Then, relenting a little, he entered the discussion, explaining why he had no faith.

"It is not I, Monsieur Ginory, who will deny the possibility of such a result. But it would be miraculous. Do you believe in miracles? The impressions of heat, of the blood, of light, on our tissues are not cataloguable, if I may be allowed the expression. The impression on the retina is produced by the refraction which is called ethereal, phosphorescent, and which is almost as difficult to seize as to weigh the imponderable. To think to find on the retina a luminous im-

pression after a certain number of hours and days would be, as Vernois has very well said, to think one can find in the organs of hearing the last sound which reverberated through them. *Peuh!* Seize the air-bubble at the end of a tube and place it in a museum as a curiosity. Is there anything left of it but a drop of water which is burst, while of the fleeting vision or the passing sound nothing remains."

The unfortunate Bernardet suffered keenly when he heard this. He wished to answer. The words came to his lips. Ah! if he was only in M. Ginory's place. The latter, with bowed head, listened and seemed to weigh each word as it dropped from M. Morin's lips.

"Let us reason it, but," the Professor went on, "since the ophthalmoscope does not show to the oculist on the retina any of the objects or beings which a sick man sees—you understand, not one of them—how can you think that photography can find that object or being on the retina of a dead man's eye?"

He waited for objections from the Examining Magistrate and Bernardet hoped that M. Ginory would combat some of the Professor's arguments. He had only to say: "What of it? Let us see! Let us experiment!" And Bernardet had longed for just these words from him; but the Magistrate remained silent, his head still bent. The police agent felt, with despair, his chance slipping, slipping away from him, and that never, never again would he find a like opportunity to test the experiment. Suddenly, the strident tones of Dr. Erwin's voice rang out sharply, like an electric bell, and Bernardet experienced a sensation like that of a sudden unexpected illumination.

"My dear Master," he respectfully began, "I saw at home in Denmark, a poor devil picked up dying, half devoured by a wolf; and who, when taken from the very jaws of the beast, still retained in the eye a very visible image in which one could see the nose and teeth of the brute. A vision! Imagination, perhaps! But the fact struck me at the time and we made a note of it."

"And?" questioned M. Morin, in a tone of raillery.

Bernardet cocked his ears as a dog does when he hears an unusual sound. M. Ginory looked at this slender young man with his long blond hair, his eyes as blue as the waters of a lake, his face pale and wearing the peculiar look common to searchers after the mysterious. The students and the others gathered about their master, remained motionless, and listened intently as to a lecture.

"And," Dr. Erwin went on frigidly, "if we had found absolutely nothing we would, at least, have kept silent about an unsuccessful research, it is useless to say. Think, then, my dear Master, the exterior objects must have imprinted themselves on the retina, did they not? reduced in size, according to the size of the place wherein they were reflected; they appeared there, they certainly appeared there! There is—I beg your pardon for referring to it, but it is to these others [and Dr. Erwin designated M. Ginory, his registrar, and Bernardet]—there is in the retina a substance of a red color, the *pourpre retinien,* very sensitive to the light. Upon the deep red of this membrane objects are seen white. And one can fix the image. M. Edmond Perrier, professor in the Museum of Natural History, reports (you know it better than I, my dear Master), in a work on animal anatomy and physiology which our students are all familiar with, that he made an experiment. After removing a rabbit's eye, a living rabbit's eye—yes, science is cruel—he placed it in a dark room, so that he could obtain upon the retina the image of some object, a window for instance, and plunged it immediately into a solution of alum and prevented the decomposition of the *pourpre retinien,* and the window could plainly be seen, fixed on the eye. In that black chamber which we have under our eyebrows, in the orbit, is a storehouse, a storehouse of images which are retained, like the image which the old Dane's eye held of the wolf's nose and teeth. And who knows? Perhaps it is possible to ask of a dead man's eye the secret of what it saw when living."

This was, put in more scientific terms by the young Danish doctor, the substance of what Bernardet believed possible. The young men had listened with the attractive sympathy

which is displayed when anything novel is explained. Rigid, upon the marble slab, the victim seemed to wait for the result of the discussion, deaf to all the confused sounds about him; his eye fixed upon the infinite, upon the unknowable which he now knew.

It was, however, this insensible body which had caused the discussion of what was an enigma to savants. What was the secret of his end? The last word of his agony? Who made that wound which had ended his life? And like a statue lying on its stone couch, the murdered man seemed to wait. What they knew not, he knew. What they wished to know, he still knew, perhaps! This doubt alone, rooted deep in M. Ginory's mind, was enough to urge him to have the experiment tried, and, excusing himself for his infatuation, he begged M. Morin to grant permission to try the experiment, which some of the doctors had thought would be successful.

"We shall be relieved even if we do not succeed, and we can but add our defeat to the others."

M. Morin's face still bore its skeptical smile. But after all, the Examining Magistrate was master of the situation, and since young Dr. Erwin brought the result of the Denmark experiment—a contribution new in these researches—to add weight to the matter, the Professor requested that he should not be asked to lend himself to an experiment which he declared in advance would be a perfectly useless one.

There was a photographic apparatus at the Morgue as at the Préfecture, used for anthropometry. Bernardet, moreover, had his kodak in his hand. One could photograph the retina as soon as the membrane was separated from the eye by the autopsy, and when, like the wing of a butterfly, it had been fastened to a piece of cork. And while Bernardet was accustomed to all the horrors of crime, yet he felt his heart beat almost to suffocation during this operation. He noticed that M. Ginory became very pale, and that he bit his lips, casting occasional pitying glances toward the dead man. On the contrary, the young men bent over the body and studied it with the admiration and joy of treasure-seekers digging in a mine. Each human fiber seemed to reveal to

them some new truth. They were like jewelers before a casket full of gems, and what they studied, weighed, examined, was a human corpse. And when those eyes, living, terrible, accusing, were removed, leaving behind them two empty orbits, the Professor suddenly spoke with marvelous eloquence, flowing and picturesque, as if he were speaking of works of art. And it was, in truth, a work of art, this wonderful mechanism which he explained to his students, who listened eagerly to each word. It was a work of art, this eye, with its sclerotic, its transparent cornea, its aqueous and vitreous humor, its crystalline lens, and the retina, like a photographic plate in that black chamber in which the luminous rays reflect, reversed, the objects seen. And M. Morin, holding between his fingers the object which he was demonstrating, spoke of the membrane formed of fibers and of the terminal elements of the optic nerve, as a professor of painting or of sculpture speaks of a gem chased by a Benvenuto.

"The human body is a marvel," cried M. Morin, "a marvel, Messieurs," and he held forth for several minutes upon the wonderful construction of this marvel. His enthusiasm was shared, moreover, by the young men and Dr. Erwin, who listened intently. Bernardet, ignorant and respectful, felt troubled in the presence of this renowned physiologist, and congratulated himself that it was he who had insisted on this experiment and caused a member of the Institute to hold forth thus. As for M. Ginory, he left the room a moment, feeling the need of air. The operation, which the surgeons prolonged with joy, made him ill, and he felt very faint. He quickly recovered, however, and returned to the dissecting room, so as not to lose any of the explanation which M. Morin was giving as he stood with the eye in his hand. And in that eye an image remained, perhaps. He was anxious to search for it, to find it.

"I will take it upon myself," Bernardet said.

VIII

THE police officer did not follow the autopsical operations closely. He was eager to know—he was impatient for the moment when, having taken the picture, he might develop the negatives and study them to see if he could discover anything, could decipher any image. He had used photography in the service of anthropometry; he had taken the pictures at the Morgue with his kodak, and now, at home in his little room, which he was able to darken completely, he was developing his plates.

Mme. Bernardet and the children were much struck with the expression of his face. It was not troubled, but preoccupied and as if he were completely absorbed. He was very quiet, eating very little, and seemed thoughtful. His wife asked him, "Art thou ill?" He responded, "No, I think not." And his little girls said to each other in low tones, "Papa is on a trail!"

He was, in truth! The hunting dog smelled the scent! The pictures which he had taken of the retina and had developed showed a result sufficiently clear for Bernardet to feel confident enough to tell his chief that he distinctly saw a visage, the face of a man, confused, no doubt, but clear enough to recognize not only a type, but a distinct type. As from the depths of a cloud, in a sort of white halo, a human face appeared whose features could be distinctly seen with a magnifying glass! The face of a man with a pointed black beard, the forehead a little bald, and blackish spots which indicated the eyes. It was only a phantom, evidently, and the photographer at the Préfecture seemed more moved than Bernardet by the proofs obtained. Clearer than in spirit photographs, which so many credulous people believe in, the image showed plainly, and in studying it one could distinctly follow the contours. A specter, perhaps, but the specter of a man who was still young and resembled, with his pointed beard, some trooper of the sixteenth century, a phantom of some Seigneur Coluet.

"For example," said the official photographer, "if one could discover a murderer by photographing a dead man's eyes, this would be miraculous. It is incredible!"

"Not more incredible," Bernardet replied, "than what the papers publish: Edison is experimenting on making the blind see by using Roentgen Rays. There is a miracle!"

Then Bernardet took his proofs to M. Ginory. The police officer felt that the magistrate, the sovereign power in criminal researches, ought, above everything, to collaborate with him, to consent to these experiments which so many others had declared useless and absurd. The taste for researches, which was with M. Ginory a matter of temperament as well as a duty to his profession, was, fortunately, keen on this scent. Criminals call, in their argot, the judges "the pryers." Curiosity in this man was combined with a knowledge of profound researches.

When Bernardet spread out on M. Ginory's desk the four photographs which he had brought with him, the first remark which the Examining Magistrate made was: "But I see nothing—a cloud, a mist, and then after?" Bernardet drew a magnifying glass from his pocket and pointed out as he would have explained an enigmatical design, the lineaments, moving his finger over the contour of the face which his nail outlined, that human face which he had seen and studied in his little room in the passage of the Elysée des Beaux-Arts. He made him see—after some moments of minute examination—he made him see that face. "It is true—there is an image there," exclaimed M. Ginory. He added: "Is it plain enough for me to see it so that I can from it imagine a living being? I see the form: divined it at first, saw it clearly defined afterward. At first it seemed very vague, but I find it sufficiently well defined so that I can see each feature, but without any special character. Oh!" continued M. Ginory excitedly, rubbing his plump little hands, "if it was only possible, if it was only possible! What a marvel!"

"It is possible, M. le Juge! have faith," Bernardet replied. "I swear to you that it is possible." This en-

thusiasm gained over the Examining Magistrate. Bernardet had found a fellow-sympathizer in his fantastic ideas. M. Ginory was now—if only to try the experiment—resolved to direct the investigation on this plan. He was anxious to first show the proofs to those who would be apt to recognize in them a person whom they might have once seen in the flesh. "To Moniche first and then to his wife," said Bernardet.

"Who is Moniche?"

"The concierge in the Boulevard de Clichy."

Ordered to come to the court, M. and Mme. Moniche were overjoyed. They were summoned to appear before the Judges. They had become important personages. Perhaps their pictures would be published in the papers. They dressed themselves as for a fête. Mme. Moniche in her Sunday best strove to do honor to M. Rovère. She said to Moniche in all sincerity: "Our duty is to avenge him!"

While sitting on a bench in one of the long, cold corridors, the porter and his wife saw pass before them prisoners led by their jailers; some looked menacing, while others had a cringing air and seemed to try to escape notice. These two persons felt that they were playing rôles as important as those in a melodrama at the Ambigu. The time seemed long to them, and M. Ginory did not call them as soon as they wished that he would. They thought of their home, which, while they were detained there, would be invaded by the curious, the gossips, and reporters.

"How slow these Judges are," growled Moniche.

When he was conducted into the presence of M. Ginory and his registrar, and seated upon a chair, he was much confused and less bitter. He felt a vague terror of all the paraphernalia of justice which surrounded him. He felt that he was running some great danger, and to the Judge's questions he replied with extreme prudence. Thanks to him and his wife M. Ginory found out a great deal about M. Rovère's private life; he penetrated into that apparently hidden existence, he searched to see if he could discover,

among the people who had visited the old ex-Consul the one among all others who might have committed the deed.

"You never saw the woman who visited Rovère?"

"Yes. The veiled lady. The Woman in Black. But I do not know her. No one knew her."

The story told by the portress about the time when she surprised the stranger and Rovère with the papers in his hand in front of the open safe made quite an impression on the Examining Magistrate.

"Do you know the name of the visitor?"

"No, Monsieur," the portress replied.

"But if you should see him again would you recognize him?"

"Certainly ! I see his face there, before me!"

She made haste to return to her home so that she might relate her impressions to her fellow gossips. The worthy couple left the court puffed up with self-esteem because of the rôle which they had been called upon to play. The obsequies were to be held the next day, and the prospect of a dramatic day in which M. and Mme. Moniche would still play this important rôle, created in them an agony which was almost joyous. The crowd around the house of the crime was always large. Some few passers-by stopped—stopped before the stone façade behind which a murder had been committed. The reporters returned again and again for news, and the couple, greedy for glory, could not open a paper without seeing their names printed in large letters. One journal had that morning even published an especial article: "Interviews with M. and Mme. Moniche."

The crowd buzzed about the lodge like a swarm of flies. M. Rovère's body had been brought back from the Morgue. The obsequies would naturally attract an enormous crowd; all the more, as the mystery was still as deep as ever. Among his papers had been found a receipt for a tomb in the cemetery at Montmartre, bought by him about a year before. In another paper, not dated, were found directions as to how his funeral was to be conducted. M. Rovère, after having passed a wandering life, wished to rest in his

native country. But no other indications of his wishes, nothing about his relatives, had been found. It seemed as if he was a man without a family, without any place in society, or any claim on any one to bury him. And this distressing isolation added to the morbid curiosity which was attached to the house, now all draped in black, with the letter "R" standing out in white against its silver escutcheon.

Who would be chief mourner? M. Rovère had appointed no one. He had asked in that paper that a short notice should be inserted in the paper giving the hour and date of the services, and giving him the simple title ex-Consul. "I hope," went on the writer, "to be taken to the cemetery quietly and followed by intimate friends, if any remain."

Intimate friends were scarce in that crowd, without doubt, but the dead man's wish could hardly be carried out. Those obsequies which he had wished to be quiet became a sort of fête, funeral and noisy; where the thousands of people crowding the Boulevard crushed each other in their desire to see, and pressed almost upon the draped funeral car which the neighbors had covered with flowers.

Everything is a spectacle for Parisians. The guardians of the peace strove to keep back the crowds; some gamins climbed into the branches of the trees. The bier had been placed at the foot of the staircase in the narrow corridor opening upon the street. Mme. Monichè had placed upon a table in the lodge some loose leaves, where Rovère's unknown friends could write their names.

Bernardet, alert, with his eyes wide open, studying the faces, searching the eyes, mingled with the crowd, looked at the file of people, scrutinized, one by one, the signatures; Bernardet, in mourning, wearing black gloves, seemed more like an undertaker's assistant than a police spy. Once he found himself directly in front of the open door of the lodge and the table where the leaves lay covered with signatures; when in the half light of the corridor draped with black, where the bier lay, he saw a man of about fifty, pale and very sad looking. He had arrived, in his turn in the

line, at the table, where he signed his name. Mme. Moniche, clothed in black, with a white handkerchief in her hand, although she was not weeping, found herself side by side with Bernardet; in fact, their elbows touched. When the man reached the table, coming from the semi-darkness of the passage, and stepped into the light which fell full on him from the window, the portress involuntarily exclaimed, "Ah!" She was evidently much excited, and caught the police officer by the hand and said:

"I am afraid!"

She spoke in such a low tone that Bernardet divined rather than heard what she meant in that stifled cry. He looked at her from the corner of his eye. He saw that she was ghastly, and again she spoke in a low tone: "He! he whom I saw with M. Rovère before the open safe!"

Bernardet gave the man one sweeping glance of the eye. He fairly pierced him through with his sharp look. The unknown, half bent over the table whereon lay the papers, showed a wide forehead, slightly bald, and a pointed beard, a little gray, which almost touched the white paper as he wrote his name.

Suddenly the police officer experienced a strange sensation; it seemed to him that this face, the shape of the head, the pointed beard, he had recently seen somewhere, and that this human silhouette recalled to him an image which he had recently studied. The perception of a possibility of a proof gave him a shock. This man who was there made him think suddenly of that phantom discernible in the photographs taken of the retina of the murdered man's eye.

"Who is that man?"

Bernardet shivered with pleasurable excitement, and, insisting upon his own impression that this unknown strongly recalled the image obtained, mentally he compared this living man, bending over the table, writing his name, with that specter which had the air of a trooper which appeared in the photograph. The contour was the same, not only of the face, but the beard. This man reminded one of a Seigneur of the time of Henry III., and Bernardet found

in that face something formidable. The man had signed his name. He raised his head, and his face, of a dull white, was turned full toward the police officer; their looks crossed, keen on Bernardet's side, veiled in the unknown. But before the fixity of the officer's gaze the strange man dropped his head for a moment; then, in his turn, he fixed a piercing, almost menacing, gaze on Bernardet. Then the latter slowly dropped his eyes and bowed; the unknown went out quickly and was lost in the crowd before the house.

"It is he! it is he!" repeated the portress, who trembled as if she had seen a ghost.

Scarcely had the unknown disappeared when the police officer took but two steps to reach the table, and bending over it in his turn, he read the name written by that man:

"Jacques Dantin."

The name awakened no remembrance in Bernardet's mind, and now it was a living problem that he had to solve.

"Tell no one that you have seen that man," he hastily said to Mme. Moniche. "No one! Do you hear?" And he hurried out into the Boulevard, picking his way through the crowd and watching out to find that Jacques Dantin, whom he wished to follow.

IX

Jacques Dantin, moreover, was not difficult to find in the crowd. He stood near the funeral car; his air was very sad. Bernardet had a fine opportunity to examine him at his ease. He was an elegant looking man, slender, with a resolute air, and frowning eyebrows which gave his face a very energetic look. His head bared to the cold wind, he stood like a statue while the bearers placed the casket in the funeral car, and Bernardet noticed the shaking of the head—a distressed shaking. The longer the police officer looked at him, studied him, the stronger grew the resemblance to the image in the photograph. Bernardet would soon know who this Jacques Dantin was, and even

at this moment he asked a question or two of some of the assistants.

"Do you know who that gentleman is standing near the hearse?"

"No."

"Do you know what Jacques Dantin does? Was he one of M. Rovère's intimate friends?"

"Jacques Dantin?"

"Yes; see, there, with the pointed beard."

"I do not know him."

Bernardet thought that if he addressed the question to M. Dantin himself he might learn all he wished to know at once, and he approached him at the moment the procession started, and walked along with him almost to the cemetery, striving to enter into conversation with him. He spoke of the dead man, sadly lamenting M. Rovère's sad fate. But he found his neighbor very silent. Upon the sidewalk of the Boulevard the dense crowd stood in respectful silence and uncovered as the cortège passed, and the officer noticed that some loose petals from the flowers dropped upon the roadway.

"There are a great many flowers," he remarked to his neighbor. "It is rather surprising, as M. Rovère seemed to have so few friends."

"He has had many," the man brusquely remarked. His voice was hoarse, and quivered with emotion. Bernardet saw that he was strongly moved. Was it sorrow? Was it bitterness of spirit? Remorse, perhaps! The man did not seem, moreover, in a very softened mood. He walked along with his eyes upon the funeral car, his head uncovered in spite of the cold, and seemed to be in deep thought. The police officer studied him from a corner of his eye. His wrinkled face was intelligent, and bore an expression of weariness, but there was something hard about the set of the mouth and insolent in the turned-up end of his mustache.

As they approached the cemetery at Montmartre—the journey was not a long one in which to make conversation—

Bernardet ventured a decisive question: "Did you know M. Rovère very well?"

The other replied: "Very well."

"And who do you think could have had any interest in this matter?" The question was brusque and cut like a knife. Jacques Dantin hesitated in his reply, looking keenly as they walked along at this little man with his smiling aspect, whose name he did not know and who had questioned him.

"It is because I have a great interest in at once commencing my researches," said Bernardet, measuring his words in order to note the effect which they would produce on this unknown man. "I am a police detective."

Oh! This time Bernardet saw Dantin shiver. There was no doubt of it; this close contact with a police officer troubled him, and he turned pale and a quick spasm passed over his face. His anxious eyes searched Bernardet's face, but, content with stealing an occasional glance of examination toward his neighbor, the little man walked along with eyes cast toward the ground. He studied Jacques Dantin in sudden, quick turns of the eye.

The car advanced slowly, turned the corner of the Boulevard, and passed into the narrow avenue which led to God's Acre. The arch of the iron bridge led to the Campo-Santo like a viaduct of living beings, over to the Land of Sleep, for it was packed with a curious crowd; it was a scene for a melodrama, the cortège and the funeral car covered with wreaths. Bernardet, still walking by Dantin's side, continued to question him. The agent noticed that these questions seemed to embarrass M. Rovère's pretended friend.

"Is it a long time since M. Rovère and Jacques Dantin have known each other?"

"We have been friends since childhood."

"And did you see him often?"

"No. Life had separated us."

"Had you seen him recently? Mme. Moniche said that you had."

"Who is Mme. Moniche?"

"The concierge of the house, and a sort of housekeeper for M. Rovère."

"Ah! Yes!" said Jacques Dantin, as if he had just remembered some forgotten sight. Bernardet, by instinct, read this man's thoughts; saw again with him also the tragic scene when the portress, suddenly entering M. Rovère's apartments, had seen him standing, face to face with Dantin, in front of the open safe, with a great quantity of papers spread out.

"Do you believe that he had many enemies?" asked the police agent, with deliberate calculation.

"No," Dantin sharply replied, without hesitation. Bernardet waited a moment, then in a firm voice he said: "M. Ginory will no doubt count a good deal on you in order to bring about the arrest of the assassin."

"M. Ginory?"

"The Examining Magistrate."

"Then he will have to make haste with his investigation," Jacques Dantin replied. "I shall soon be obliged to leave Paris." This reply astonished Bernardet. This departure, of which the motive was probably a simple one, seemed to him strange under the tragic circumstances. M. Dantin, moreover, did not hesitate to give him, without his asking for it, his address, adding that he would hold himself in readiness on his return from the cemetery at the disposition of the Examining Magistrate.

"The misfortune is that I can tell nothing, as I know nothing. I do not even suspect who could have any interest in killing that unfortunate man. A professional criminal, without doubt."

"I do not believe so."

The cortège had now reached one of the side avenues; a white fog enveloped everything, and the marble tombs shone ghostly through it. The spot chosen by M. Rovère himself was at the end of the Avenue de la Cloche. The car slowly rolled toward the open grave. Mme. Moniche, overcome with grief, staggered as she walked along, but her husband, the tailor, seemed to be equal to the occasion

and his rôle. They both assumed different expressions behind their dead. And Paul Rodier walked along just in front of them, notebook in hand. Bernardet promised himself to keep close watch on Dantin and see in what manner he carried himself at the tomb. A pressure of the crowd separated them for a moment, but the officer was perfectly satisfied. Standing on the other side of the grave, face to face with him, was Dantin; a row of the most curious had pushed in ahead of Bernardet, but in this way he could better see Dantin's face, and not miss the quiver of a muscle. He stood on tiptoe and peered this way and that, between the heads, and could thus scrutinize and analyze, without being perceived himself.

Dantin was standing on the very edge of the grave. He held himself very upright, in a tense, almost aggressive way, and looked, from time to time, into the grave with an expression of anger and almost defiance. Of what was he thinking? In that attitude, which seemed to be a revolt against the destiny which had come to his friend, Bernardet read a kind of hardening of the will against an emotion which might become excessive and telltale. He was not, as yet, persuaded of the guilt of this man, but he did not find in that expression of defiance the tenderness which ought to be shown for a friend—a lifelong friend, as Dantin had said that Rovère was. And then the more he examined him—there, for example, seeing his dark silhouette clearly defined in front of the dense white of a neighboring column—the more the aspect of this man corresponded with that of the vision transfixed in the dead man's eye. Yes, it was the same profile of a trooper, his hand upon his hip, as if resting upon a rapier. Bernardet blinked his eyes in order to better see that man. He perceived a man who strongly recalled the vague form found in that retina, and his conviction came to the aid of his instinct, gradually increased, and became, little by little, invincible, irresistible. He repeated the address which this man had given him; "Jacques Dantin, Rue de Richelieu, 114." He would make haste to give that name to M. Ginory, and have a citation served

upon him. Why should this Dantin leave Paris? What was his manner of living? his means of existence? What were the passions, the vices, of the man standing there with the austere mien of a Huguenot, in front of the open grave?

Bernardet saw that, despite his strong will and his wish to stand there impassive, Jacques Dantin was troubled when, with a heavy sound, the casket glided over the cords down into the grave. He bit the ends of his mustache and his gloved hand made several irresistible, nervous movements. And the look cast into that grave! The look cast at that casket lying in the bottom of that grave! On that casket was a plate bearing the inscription: "Louis Pierre Rovère." That mute look, rapid and grief-stricken, was cast upon that open casket, which contained the body—the gash across its throat, dissected, mutilated; the face with those dreadful eyes, which had been taken from their orbits, and, after delivering up their secret, replaced!

They now defiled past the grave, and Dantin, the first, with a hand which trembled, sprinkled upon the casket those drops of water which are for our dead the last tears. Ah! but he was pale, almost livid; and how he trembled—this man with a stern face! Bernardet noticed the slightest trace of emotion. He approached in his turn and took the holy water sprinkler; then, as he turned away, desirous of catching up with M. Dantin, he heard his name called, and, turning, saw Paul Rodier, whose face was all smiles.

"Well! Monsieur Bernardet, what new?" he asked. The tall young man had a charming air.

"Nothing new," said the agent.

"You know that this murder has aroused a great deal of interest?"

"I do not doubt it."

"Léon Luzarche is enchanted. Yes, Luzarche, the novelist. He had begun a novel, of which the first instalment was published in the same paper which brought out the first news of 'The Crime of the Boulevard de Clichy,' and as the paper has sold, sold, sold, he thinks that it is his

story which has caused the immense and increased sales. No one is reading 'l'Ange-Gnome,' but the murder. All novelists ought to try to have a fine assassination published at the same time as their serials, so as to increase the sales of the paper. What a fine collaboration, Monsieur! Pleasantly, Monsieur! Have you any unpublished facts?"

"No."

"Not one? Not a trace?"

"Nothing," Bernardet replied.

"Oh, well! I—I have some, Monsieur—but it will surprise you. Read my paper! Make the papers sell."

"But"—began the officer.

"See here! Professional secret! Only, have you thought of the woman in black who came occasionally to see the ex-Consul?"

"Certainly."

"Well, she must be made to come back—that woman in black. It is not an easy thing to do. But I believe that I have ferreted her out. Yes, in one of the provinces."

"Where?"

"Professional secret," repeated the reporter, laughing.

"And if M. Ginory asks for your professional secret?"

"I will answer him as I answer you. Read my paper. Read *Lutèce!*"

"But the Judge, to him——"

"Professional secret," said Paul Rodier for the third time. "But what a romance it would make! The Woman in Black!"

While listening, Bernardet had not lost sight of M. Dantin, who, in the center of one of the avenues, stood looking at the slowly moving crowd of curiosity-seekers. He seemed to be vainly searching for a familiar face. He looked haggard. Whether it was grief or remorse, he certainly showed violent emotion. The police officer divined that a sharp struggle was taking place within that man's heart, and the sadness was great with which he watched that crowd in order to discover some familiar face, but he

beheld only those of the curious. What Bernardet considered of the greatest importance was not to lose sight of this person of whose existence he was ignorant an hour before; and who, to him, was the perpetrator of the deed or an accomplice. He followed Dantin at a distance, who, from the cemetery at Montmartre went on foot directly to the Rue de Richelieu, and stopped at the number he had given, 114.

Bernardet allowed some minutes to pass after the man on whose track he was had entered. Then he asked the concierge if M. Jacques Dantin was at home. He questioned him closely and became convinced that M. Rovère's friend had really lived there two years and had no profession.

"Then," said the police agent, "it is not this Dantin for whom I am looking. He is a banker." He excused himself, went out, hailed a fiacre, and gave the order: "To the Préfecture."

His report to the Chief, M. Morel, was soon made. He listened to him with attention, for he had absolute confidence in the police officer. "Never any *gaff* with Bernardet," M. Morel was wont to say. He, like Bernardet, soon felt convinced that this man was probably the murderer of the ex-Consul.

"As to the motive which led to the crime, we shall know it later."

He wished, above everything else, to have strict inquiries made into Dantin's past life, in regard to his present existence; and the inquiries would be compared with his answers to the questions which M. Ginory would ask him when he had been cited as a witness.

"Go at once to M. Ginory's room, Bernardet," said the Chief. "During this time I would learn a little about what kind of a man this is."

Bernardet had only to cross some corridors and mount a few steps to reach the gallery upon which M. Ginory's room opened. While waiting to be admitted he passed up and down; seated on benches were a number of malefactors, some of whom knew him well, who were waiting examina-

tion. He was accustomed to see this sight daily, and without being moved, but this time he was overcome by a sort of agony, a spasm which contracted even his fingers and left his nerves in as quivering a state as does insomnia. Truly, in the present case he was much more concerned than in an ordinary man-hunt. The officer experienced the fear which an inventor feels before the perfection of a new discovery. He had undertaken a formidable problem, apparently insoluble, and he desired to solve it. Once or twice he took out from the pocket of his redingote an old worn case and looked at the proofs of the retina which he had pasted on a card. There could be no doubt. This figure, a little confused, had the very look of the man who had bent over the grave. M. Ginory would be struck by it when he had Jacques Dantin before him. Provided the Examining Magistrate still had the desire which Bernardet had incited in him, to push the matter to the end. Fortunately M. Ginory was very curious. With this curiosity anything might happen. The time seemed long. What if this Dantin, who spoke of leaving Paris, should disappear, should escape the examination? What miserable little affair occupied M. Ginory? Would he ever be at liberty?

The door opened, a man in a blouse was led out; the registrar appeared on the threshold and Bernardet asked if he could not see M. Ginory immediately, as he had an important communication to make to him.

"I will not detain him long," he said.

Far from appearing annoyed, the Magistrate seemed delighted to see the officer. He related to him all he knew, how he had seen the man at M. Rovère's funeral. That Mme. Moniche had recognized him as the one whom she had surprised standing with M. Rovère before the open safe. That he had signed his name and took first rank in the funeral cortège, less by reason of an old friendship which dated from childhood than by that strange and impulsive sentiment which compels the guilty man to haunt the scene of his crime, to remain near his victim, as if the

murder, the blood, the corpse, held for him a morbid fascination.

"I shall soon know," said M. Ginory. He dictated to the registrar a citation to appear before him, rang the bell, and gave the order to serve the notice on M. Dantin at the given address and to bring him to the Palais.

"Do not lose sight of him," he said to Bernardet, and began some other examinations. Bernardet bowed and his eyes shone like those of a sleuth hound on the scent of his prey.

X

Jacques Dantin arrived at the Palais in answer to the Magistrate's citation, with the apparent alacrity of a man who, regretting a friend tragically put out of the world, wishes to aid in avenging him. He did not hesitate a second, and Bernardet, who saw him enter the carriage, was struck with the seeming eagerness and haste with which he responded to the Magistrate's order. When M. Ginory was informed that Jacques Dantin had arrived, he allowed an involuntary "Ah!" to escape him. This ah! seemed to express the satisfaction of an impatient spectator when the signal is given which announces that the curtain is about to be raised. For the Examining Magistrate, the drama in which he was about to unravel the mystery was to begin. He kept his eyes fixed upon the door, attributing, correctly, a great importance to the first impression the comer would make upon him as he entered the room. M. Ginory found that he was much excited; this was to him a novel thing; but by exercising his strong will he succeeded in mastering the emotion, and his face and manner showed no trace of it.

In the open door M. Jacques Dantin appeared. The first view, for the Magistrate, was favorable. The man was tall, well built; he bowed with grace and looked straight before him. But at the same time M. Ginory was struck by the strange resemblance of this haughty face to that

image obtained by means of Bernardet's kodak. It seemed to him that this image had the same stature, the same form as that man surrounded by the hazy clouds. Upon a second examination it seemed to the Magistrate that the face betrayed a restrained violence, a latent brutality. The eyes were stern, under their bristling brows; the pointed beard, quite thin on the cheeks, showed the heavy jaws, and under the gray mustache the under lip protruded like those of certain Spanish cavaliers painted by Velasquez.

"Prognathous," thought M. Ginory, as he noticed this characteristic. With a gesture he motioned M. Dantin to a chair. The man was there before the Judge who, with crossed hands, his elbows leaning on his papers, seemed ready to talk of insignificant things, while the registrar's bald head was bent over his black table as he rapidly took notes. The interview took on a grave tone, but as between two men who, meeting in a salon, speak of the morning or of the première of the evening before, and M. Ginory asked M. Dantin for some information in regard to M. Rovère.

"Did you know him intimately?"

"Yes, M. le Juge."

"For how many years?"

"For more than forty. We were comrades at a school in Bordeaux."

"You are a Bordelais?"

"Like Rovère, yes," Dantin replied.

"Of late, have you seen Monsieur Rovère frequently?"

"I beg your pardon, M. le Juge, but what do you mean by of late?"

M. Ginory believed that he had discovered in this question put by a man who was himself being interrogated—a tactic—a means of finding, before replying, time for reflection. He was accustomed to these maneuvers of the accused.

"When I say of late," he replied, "I mean during the past few weeks or days which preceded the murder—if that suits you."

"I saw him often, in fact, even oftener than formerly."

"Why?"

Jacques Dantin seemed to hesitate. "I do not know—chance. In Paris one has intimate friends, one does not see them for some months; and suddenly one sees them again, and one meets them more frequently."

"Have you ever had any reason for the interruptions in your relations with M. Rovère when you ceased to see him, as you say?"

"None whatever."

"Was there between you any sort of rivalry, any motive for coldness?"

"Any motive—any rivalry. What do you mean?"

"I do not know," said the great man; "I ask you. I am questioning you."

The registrar's pen ran rapidly and noiselessly over the paper, with the speed of a bird on the wing.

These words, "I am questioning you," seemed to make an unexpected, disagreeable impression on Dantin, and he frowned.

"When did you visit Rovère the last time?"

"The last time?"

"Yes. Strive to remember."

"Two or three days before the murder."

"It was not two or three days; it was two days exactly before the assassination."

"You are right, I beg your pardon."

The Examining Magistrate waited a moment, looking the man full in the eyes. It seemed to him that a slight flush passed over his hitherto pale face.

"Do you suspect anyone as the murderer of Rovère?" asked M. Ginory after a moment's reflection.

"No one," said Dantin. "I have tried to think of someone."

"Had Rovère any enemies?"

"I do not know of any."

The Magistrate swung around by a detour habitual with him to Jacques Dantin's last visit to the murdered man, and begged him to be precise, and asked him if anything had

especially struck him during that last interview with his friend.

"The idea of suicide having been immediately dropped on the simple examination of the wound, no doubt exists as to the cause of death. Rovère was assassinated. By whom? In your last interview was there any talk between you of any uneasiness which he felt in regard to anything? Was he occupied with any especial affair? Had he—sometimes one has presentiments—any presentiment of an impending evil, that he was running any danger?"

"No," Dantin replied. "Rovère made no allusion to me of any peril which he feared. I have asked myself who could have any interest in his death. One might have done the deed for plunder."

"That seems very probable to me," said the Magistrate, "but the examination made in the apartment proves that not a thing had been touched. Theft was not the motive."

"Then?" asked Dantin.

The sanguine face of the Magistrate, that robust visage, with its massive jaws, lighted up with a sort of ironical expression.

"Then we are here to search for the truth and to find it." In this response, made in a mocking tone, the registrar, who knew every varying shade of tone in his Chief's voice, raised his head, for in this tone he detected a menace.

"Will you tell me all that passed in that last interview?"

"Nothing whatever which could in any way put justice on the track of the criminal."

"But yet can you, or, rather, I should say, ought you not to relate to me all that was said or done? The slightest circumstance might enlighten us."

"Rovère spoke to me of private affairs," Dantin replied, but quickly added: "They were insignificant things."

"What are insignificant things?"

"Remembrances—family matters."

"Family things are not insignificant, above all in a case like this. Had Rovère any family? No relative assisted at the obsequies."

Jacques Dantin seemed troubled, unnerved rather, and this time it was plainly visible. He replied in a short tone, which was almost brusque:

"He talked of the past."

"What past?" asked the Judge quickly.

"Of his youth—of moral debts."

M. Ginory turned around in his chair, leaned back, and said in a caustic tone: "Truly, Monsieur, you certainly ought to complete your information and not make an enigma of your deposition. I do not understand this useless reticence, and moral debts, to use your words, they are only to gain time. What, then, was M. Rovère's past?"

Dantin hesitated a moment; not very long. Then he firmly said: "That, M. le Juge, is a secret confided to me by my friend, and as it has nothing to do with this matter, I ask you to refrain from questioning me about it."

"I beg your pardon," the magistrate replied. "There is not, there cannot be a secret for an Examining Magistrate. In Rovère's interests, whose memory ought to have public vindication, yes, in his interests, and I ought to say also in your own, it is necessary that you should state explicitly what you have just alluded to. You tell me that there is a secret. I wish to know it."

"It is the confidence of a dead person, Monsieur," Dantin replied, in vibrating tones.

"There are no confidences when justice is in the balance."

"But it is also the secret of a living person," said Jacques Dantin.

"Is it yourself of whom you speak?"

He gazed keenly at the face, now tortured and contracted.

Dantin replied: "No, I do not speak of myself, but of another."

"That other—who is he?"

"It is impossible to tell you."

"Impossible?"

"Absolutely impossible!"

"I will repeat to you my first question—'Why?'"

"Because I have sworn on my honor to reveal it to no one."

"Ah, ah!" said Ginory mockingly; "it was a vow? That is perfect!"

"Yes, M. le Juge; it was a vow."

"A vow made to whom?"

"To Rovère."

"Who is no longer here to release you from it. I understand."

"And," asked Dantin, with a vehemence which made the registrar's thin hand tremble as it flew over the paper, "what do you understand?"

"Pardon," said M. Ginory; "you are not here to put questions, but to answer those which are asked you. It is certain that a vow which binds the holder of a secret is a means of defense, but the accused have, by making common use of it, rendered it useless."

The Magistrate noticed the almost menacing frown with which Dantin looked at him at the words "the accused."

"The accused?" said the man, turning in his chair. "Am I one of the accused?" His voice was strident, almost strangled.

"I do not know that," said M. Ginory, in a very calm tone; "I say that you wish to keep your secret, and it is a claim which I do not admit."

"I repeat, M. le Juge, that the secret is not mine."

"It is no longer a secret which can remain sacred here. A murder has been committed, a murderer is to be found, and everything you know you ought to reveal to justice."

"But if I give you my word of honor that it has not the slightest bearing on the matter—with the death of Rovère?"

"I shall tell my registrar to write your very words in reply—he has done it—I shall continue to question you, precisely because you speak to me of a secret which has been confided to you and which you refuse to disclose to me. Because you do refuse?"

"Absolutely!"

"In spite of what I have said to you? It is a warning; you know it well!"

"In spite of your warning!"

"Take care!" M. Ginory softly said. His angry face had lost its wonted amiability. The registrar quickly raised his head. He felt that a decisive moment had come. The Examining Magistrate looked directly into Dantin's eyes and slowly said: "You remember that you were seen by the portress at the moment when Rovère, standing with you in front of his open safe, showed you some valuables?"

Dantin waited a moment before he replied, as if measuring these words, and searching to find out just what M. Ginory was driving at. This silence, short and momentous, was dramatic. The Magistrate knew it well—that moment of agony when the question seems like a cord, like a lasso suddenly thrown, and tightening around one's neck. There was always, in his examination, a tragic moment.

"I remember very well that I saw a person whom I did not know enter the room where I was with M. Rovère," Jacques Dantin replied at last.

"A person whom you did not know? You know her very well, since you had more than once asked her if M. Rovère was at home. That person is Mme. Moniche, who has made her deposition."

"And what did she say in her deposition?"

The Magistrate took a paper from the table in front of him and read: "When I entered, M. Rovère was standing before his safe, and I noticed that the individual of whom I spoke [the individual is you] cast upon the coupons a look which made me cold. I thought to myself: 'This man looks as if he is meditating some bad deed.'"

"That is to say," brusquely said Dantin, who had listened with frowning brows and with an angry expression, "that Mme. Moniche accuses me of having murdered M. Rovère!"

"You are in too much haste. Mme. Moniche has not said that precisely. She was only surprised—surprised and

frightened—at your expression as you looked at the deeds, bills, and coupons."

"Those coupons," asked Dantin rather anxiously, "have they, then, been stolen?"

"Ah, that we know nothing about," and the Magistrate smiled. "They have found in Rovère's safe in the neighborhood of 460,000 francs in coupons, city of Paris bonds, shares in mining societies, rent rolls; but nothing to prove that there was before the assassination more than that sum."

"Had it been forced open?"

"No; but anyone familiar with the dead man, a friend who knew the secret of the combination of the safe, the four letters forming the word, could have opened it without trouble."

M. Ginory touched the ivory button of an electric bell, as if on this gesture depended some event of his life. A guard entered. M. Ginory said to him in a short tone: "Have the notes been brought?"

"M. Bernardet has just brought them to me, M. le Juge."

"Give them to me!" He then added: "Is M. Bernardet here?"

"Yes, M. le Juge."

"Very well."

Jacques Dantin remembered the little man with whom he had talked on the journey from the house of death to the tomb, where he had heard someone call "Bernardet." He did not know at the time, but the name had struck him. Why did his presence seem of so much importance to this Examining Magistrate? And he looked, in his turn, at M. Ginory, who, a little near-sighted, was bending his head, with its sandy hair, its bald forehead, on which the veins stood out like cords, over his notes, which had been brought to him. Interesting notes—important, without doubt—for, visibly satisfied, M. Ginory allowed a word or two to escape him: "Good! Yes—Yes—Fine! Ah! Ah!—Very good!" Then suddenly Dantin saw Ginory raise his head and look at him—as the saying is—in the white of the eyes.

He waited a moment before speaking, and suddenly put this question, thrust at Dantin like a knife-blow:

"Are you a gambler, as I find?"

The question made Jacques Dantin fairly bound from his chair. A gambler! Why did this man ask him if he was a gambler? What had his habits, his customs, his vices even, to do with this cause for which he had been cited, to do with Rovère's murder?

"You are a gambler," continued the Examining Magistrate, casting from time to time a keen glance toward his notes. "One of the inspectors of gambling dens saw you lose at the Cercle des Publicistes 25,000 francs in one night."

"It is possible; the only important point is that I paid them!" The response was short, crisp, showing a little irritation and stupefaction.

"Assuredly," said the Judge. "But you have no fortune. You have recently borrowed a considerable sum from the usurers in order to pay for some losses on the Bourse."

Dantin became very pale, his lips quivered, and his hands trembled. These signs of emotion did not escape the eyes of M. Ginory nor the registrar's.

"Is it from your little notes that you have learned all that?" he demanded.

"Certainly," M. Ginory replied. "We have been seeking for some hours for accurate information concerning you; started a sort of diary or rough draught of your biography. You are fond of pleasure. You are seen, in spite of your age—I pray you to pardon me, there is no malice in the remark: I am older than you—everywhere where is found the famous Tout-Paris which amuses itself. The easy life is the most difficult for those who have no fortune. And, according to these notes—I refer to them again—of fortune you have none."

"That is to say," interrupted Dantin brusquely, "it would be very possible that, in order to obtain money for my needs, in order to steal the funds in his iron safe, I would assassinate my friend?"

M. Ginory did not allow himself to display any emotion at the insolent tone of these words, which had burst forth, almost like a cry. He looked Dantin full in the face, and with his hands crossed upon his notes, he said:

"Monsieur, in a matter of criminal investigation a Magistrate, eager for the truth, ought to admit that anything is possible, even probable, but in this case I ought to recognize the fact that you have not helped me in my task. A witness finds you tête-à-tête with the victim and surprises your trouble at the moment when you are examining Rovère's papers. I ask what it was that happened between you; you reply that that is your secret, and for explanation you give me your word of honor that it had nothing whatever to do with the murder.

"Come, now, it is not very difficult, and I have the right to know," said M. Ginory. After a moment Jacques Dantin said in a strong voice: "I swear to you, Monsieur, that nothing Rovère said to me when I saw him the last time could assist justice in any way whatsoever, and I beg of you not to question me further about it."

"Will you answer?"

"I cannot, Monsieur."

"The more you hesitate the more reason you give me to think that the communication would be grave."

"Very grave, but it has nothing to do with your investigation."

"It's not for you to outline the duties of my limits or my rights. Once more, I order you to reply."

"I cannot."

"You will not."

"I cannot," brusquely said the man run to earth, with an accent of violence.

The duel was finished.

M. Ginory began to laugh, or, rather, there was a nervous contraction of his mouth, and his sanguine face wore a scoffing look, while a mechanical movement of his massive jaws made him resemble a bulldog about to bite.

"I beg of you to examine these photographic proofs," said

the Magistrate to Dantin. He held them out to him, and Dantin spread them on the table (there were four of them), then he put on his eyeglasses in order to see better. "What is that?" he asked.

"Look carefully," replied the Magistrate. Dantin bent over the proofs, examined them one by one, divined, rather than saw, in the picture, which was a little hazy, the portrait of a man; and upon close examination began to see in the specter a vague resemblance.

"Do you not see that this picture bears a resemblance to you?"

This time Dantin seemed the prey of some nightmare, and his eyes searched M. Ginory's face with a sort of agony. The expression struck Ginory. One would have said that a ghost had suddenly appeared to Dantin.

"You say that it resembles me?"

"Yes. Look carefully! At first the portrait is vague; on closer examination it comes out from the halo which surrounds it, and the person who appears there bears your air, your features, your characteristics——"

"It is possible," said Dantin. "It seems to resemble me; it seems as if I were looking at myself in a pocket mirror. But what does that signify?"

"That signifies—Oh! I am going to astonish you. That signifies"—M. Ginory turned toward his registrar: "You saw the other evening, Favarel, the experiment in which Dr. Oudin showed us the heart and lungs performing their functions in the thorax of a living man, made visible by the Roentgen Rays. Well! This is not any more miraculous. These photographs [he turned now toward Dantin] were taken of the retina of the dead man's eye. They are the reflection, the reproduction of the image implanted there, the picture of the last living being contemplated in the agony; the last visual sensation which the unfortunate man experienced. The retina has given to us—as a witness—the image of the living person seen by the dead man for the last time!"

A deep silence fell upon the three men in that little room,

where one of them alone lost his foothold at this strange revelation. For the Magistrate it was a decisive moment; when all had been said, when the man, having been questioned closely, jumps at the foregone conclusion. As for the registrar, however blasé he may have become by these daily experiences, it was the decisive moment! the moment when, the line drawn from the water, the fish is landed, writhing on the hook!

Jacques Dantin, with an instinctive movement, had rejected, pushed back on the table those photographs which burned his fingers like the cards in which some fortune teller has deciphered the signs of death.

"Well?" asked M. Ginory.

"Well!" repeated Dantin in a strangled tone, either not comprehending or comprehending too much, struggling as if under the oppression of a nightmare.

"How do you explain how your face, your shadow if you prefer, was found reflected in Rovère's eyes, and that in his agony, this was probably what he saw; yes, saw bending over him?"

Dantin cast a frightened glance around the room, and asked himself if he was not shut up in a maniac's cell; if the question was real; if the voice he heard was not the voice of a dream!

"How can I explain? but I cannot explain, I do not understand, I do not know—it is madness, it is frightful, it is foolish!"

"But yet," insisted M. Ginory, "this folly, as you call it, must have some explanation."

"What do you wish to have me say? I do not understand. I repeat, I do not understand."

"What if you do not, you cannot deny your presence in the house at the moment of Rovère's death——"

"Why cannot I deny it?" Dantin interrupted.

"Because the vision is there, hidden, hazy in the retina; because this photograph, in which you recognized yourself, denounces, points out, your presence at the moment of the last agony."

"I was not there! I swear that I was not there!" Dantin fervently declared.

"Then, explain," said the Magistrate.

Dantin remained silent a moment, as if frightened. Then he stammered: "I am dreaming!—I am dreaming!" and M. Ginory replied in a calm tone:

"Notice that I attribute no exaggerated importance to these proofs. It is not on them alone that I base the accusation. But they constitute a strange witness, very disquieting in its mute eloquence. They add to the doubt which your desire for silence has awakened. You tell me that you were not near Rovère when he died. These proofs, irrefutable as a fact, seem to prove at once the contrary. Then, the day Rovère was assassinated where were you?"

"I do not know. At home, without doubt. I will have to think it over. At what hour was Rovère killed?"

M. Ginory made a gesture of ignorance and in a tone of raillery said: "That! There are others who know it better than I." And Dantin, irritated, looked at him.

"Yes," went on the Magistrate, with mocking politeness, "the surgeons who can tell the hour in which he was killed." He turned over his papers. "The assassination was about an hour before midday. In Paris, in broad daylight, at that hour, a murder was committed!"

"At that hour," said Jacques Dantin, "I was just leaving home."

"To go where?"

"For a walk. I had a headache. I was going to walk in the Champs-Elysées to cure it."

"And did you, in your walk, meet anyone whom you knew?"

"No one."

"Did you go into some shop?"

"I did not."

"In short, you have no *alibi?*"

The word made Dantin again tremble. He felt the meshes of the net closing around him.

"An *alibi!* Ah that! Decidedly, Monsieur, you accuse me of assassinating my friend," he violently said.

"I do not accuse; I ask a question." And M. Ginory in a dry tone, which gradually became cutting and menacing, said: "I question you, but I warn you that the interview has taken a bad turn. You do not answer; you pretend to keep secret I know not what information which concerns us. You are not yet exactly accused. But—but—but—you are going to be——"

The Magistrate waited a moment as if to give the man time to reflect, and he held his pen suspended, after dipping it in the ink, as an auctioneer holds his ivory hammer before bringing it down to close a sale. "I am going to drop the pen, it seemed to say. Dantin, very angry, remained silent. His look of bravado seemed to say: "Do you dare? If you dare, do it!"

"You refuse to speak?" asked Ginory for the last time.

"I refuse."

"You have willed it! Do you persist in giving no explanation; do you intrench yourself behind I know not what scruple or duty to honor; do you keep to your systematic silence? For the last time, do you still persist in this?"

"I have nothing—nothing—nothing to tell you!" Dantin cried in a sort of rage.

"Oh, well! Jacques Dantin," and the Magistrate's voice was grave and suddenly solemn, "you are from this moment arrested." The pen, uplifted until this instant, fell upon the paper. It was an order for arrest. The registrar looked at the man. Jacques Dantin did not move. His expression seemed vague, the fixed expression of a person who dreams with wide-open eyes. M. Ginory touched one of the electric buttons above his table and pointed Dantin out to the guards, whose shakos suddenly darkened the doorway. "Take away the prisoner," he said shortly and mechanically, and, overcome, without revolt, Jacques Dantin allowed himself to be led through the corridors of the

Palais, saying nothing, comprehending nothing, stumbling occasionally, like an intoxicated man or a somnambulist.

XI

M. Bernardet was triumphant. He went home to dinner in a jubilant mood. His three little girls, dressed alike, clasped him round the neck, all at the same time, while Mme. Bernardet, always fresh, smiling, and gay, held up her face with its soft, round, rosy cheeks to him.

He suddenly remembered what Paul Rodier had said to him. "Read my journal!" This woman in black, found in the province, did she really exist? Had the novelist written a romance in order to follow the example of his friend? He looked over the paper to see if Paul Rodier had collaborated, as his friend had. Bernardet skipped over the headlines and glanced at the theatrical news. "Politics—they are all the same to me—Ministerial crisis—nothing new about that. That could as well be published in yesterday's paper as in to-day's! 'Crime of the Boulevard de Clichy'—ah! Good! Very good! We shall see." And he began to read. Had Paul Rodier invented all the information to which he had treated the public? What was certain was that the police officer frowned and now gave strict attention to what he was reading, as if weighing the reporter's words.

Rodier had republished the biography of the ex-Consul. M. Rovère had been mixed, in South America, in violent dramas. He was a romantic person, about whom more than one adventure in Buenos Ayres was known. The reporter had gained his information from an Argentine journal, the *Prensa,* established in Paris, whose editor, in South America, had visited, intimately, the French Consul. The appearance of a woman in black, those visits made on fixed dates, as on anniversaries, revealed an intimacy, a relationship perhaps, of the murdered man with that unknown

woman. The woman was young, elegant, and did not live in Paris. Rodier had set himself to discover her retreat, her name; and perhaps, thanks to her, to unravel the mystery which still enveloped the murder.

"*Heuh!* That is not very precise information," thought the police officer. But it at least awoke Bernardet's curiosity and intelligence. It solved no problem, but it put one. M. de Sartines' famous "*search for the woman*" came naturally to Paul Rodier's pen. And he finished the article with some details about Jacques Dantin, the intimate, the only friend of Louis Pierre Rovere; and the reporter, when he had written this, was still ignorant that Dantin was under arrest.

With his faculty for believing in his dreams, of seeing his visions appear, realized and living—a faculty which, in such a man, seemed like the strange hallucination of a poet—Bernardet did not doubt for a moment the reality of this phantom which had appeared in the retina of the eye. It was nothing more, that eye removed by the surgeon's scalpel, than an avenging mirror. It accused, it overwhelmed! Jacques Dantin was found there in all the atrocity of his crime.

"When I think, when I think that they did not wish to try the experiment. It is made now!" thought Bernardet.

But would Dantin confess?

The next day after M. Ginory had put him under arrest Bernardet had gone to the Palais for news. He wished to consult his chief about the "Woman in Black," to ask him what he thought of the article which had been published in the paper by Paul Rodier. M. Leriche attached no great importance to it.

"A reporter's information. Very vague. There is always a woman, *parbleu!* in the life of every man. But did this one know Dantin? She seems to me simply an old, abandoned friend, and who came occasionally to ask aid of the old boy——"

"The woman noticed by Moniche is young," said Bernardet.

"Abandoned friends are often young," M. Leriche replied, visibly enchanted with his observation.

As for Dantin, he still maintained his obstinate silence. He persisted in finding iniquitous an arrest for which there was no motive, and he kept the haughty, almost provoking attitude of those whom the Chief called the greatest culprits.

"Murderers in redingotes believe that they have sprung from Jupiter's thigh, and will not admit that anyone should be arrested except those who wear smocks and peaked hats. They believe in an aristocracy and its privileges, and threaten to have us removed—you know that very well, Bernardet. Then, as time passes, they become, in a measure, calm and meek as little lambs; then they whimper and confess. Dantin will do as all the others have done. For the moment he howls about his innocence, and will threaten us, you will see, with a summons from the Chamber. That is of no importance."

The Chief then gave the officer some instructions. He need not trouble himself any more, just now, about the Dantin affair, but attend to another matter of less importance—a trivial affair. After the murder and his experiences at the Morgue this matter seemed a low one to Bernardet.

But each duty has its antithesis. The police officer put into this petty affair of a theft the same zeal, the same sharp attention with which he had investigated the crime of the Boulevard de Clichy. It was his profession.

Bernardet started out on his quest. It was near the Halles (markets) that he had to work this time. The suspected man was probably one of the rascals who prowl about day and night, living on adventures, and without any home; sleeping under the bridges, or in one of the hovels on the outskirts of the Rue de Venise, where vice, distress, and crime flourished. Bernardet first questioned the owner of the stolen property, obtained all the information which he could about the suspected man, and, with his keen scent for a criminal aroused, he glanced at everything—men, things, objects that would have escaped a less practiced

eye. He was walking slowly along toward the Permanence, looking keenly at the passers-by, the articles in the shops, the various movements in the streets, to see if he could get a hint upon which to work.

"When one governs," thought Bernardet, "one ought to have the habit of going afoot in the street. One can learn nothing from the depths of a coupé driven by a coachman wearing a tri-colored cockade." He was going to the Préfecture, the Permanence, when in the Rue de Bons-Enfants he was instinctively attracted to a shop window where rusty old arms, tattered uniforms, worn shakos, garments without value, smoky pictures, yellowed engravings and chance ornaments, rare old copies of books, old romances, ancient books, with eaten bindings, a mass of dissimilar objects—lost keys, belt buckles, abolished medals, battered sous—were mixed together in an oblong space as in a sort of trough. With that sort of magnetism which searchers, great or small, intuitively feel—a collector of knick-knacks, discoverers of unknown countries, bookworms bent over volumes at four sous apiece, or chemists crouched over a retort—Bernardet was suddenly attracted by a portrait exposed as an object rarer than the others, in the midst of this detritus of abandoned luxury or of past military glory.

Yes, among the tobacco boxes, the belt buckles, the Turkish poniards, watches with broken cases, commonplace Japanese ornaments, a painting, oval in form, lay there—a sort of large medallion without a frame, and at first sight, by a singular attraction, it drew and held the attention of the police officer.

"Ah!" said Bernardet out loud, "but this is singular."

He leaned forward until his nose touched the cold glass, and peered fixedly at the picture. This painting, as large as one's hand, was the portrait of a man, and Bernardet fully believed at the first look he recognized the person whom the painter had reproduced.

Something of a connoisseur in painting, without doubt, in his quality of amateur photographer, much accustomed

to criticise a portrait if it was not a perfect likeness, Bernardet found in this picture a startling resemblance to Jacques Dantin; it was the very man himself! Bernardet exclaimed: "It is he!"

And most certainly it was Jacques Dantin himself. The more the officer examined it, the more convinced he became that this was a portrait of the man whom he had accompanied to the cemetery and to prison. But how could this picture have come into this bric-à-brac shop, and of whom could the dealer have obtained it? A reply to this would probably not be very difficult to obtain, and the police officer pushed back the door and found himself in the presence of a very large woman, with a pale, puffy face, which was surrounded by a lace cap. Her huge body was enveloped in a knitted woolen shawl. She wore spectacles.

"Have you had that portrait a long time?" he asked of the shop woman.

"I put it in the window to-day for the first time," the huge woman answered. "Oh, it is a choice bit. It was painted by a wicked one."

"Who brought it here?"

"Someone who wished to sell it. A passer-by. If it would interest you to know his name——"

"Yes, certainly, it would interest me to know it," Bernardet replied.

The shopwoman looked at Bernardet defiantly and asked this question:

"Do you know the man whose portrait that is?"

"No. I do not know him. But this resembles one of my relatives. It pleases me. How much is it?"

"A hundred francs," said the big woman.

Bernardet suppressed at the same time a sudden start and a smile.

"A hundred francs! *Diable!* how fast you go. It is worth sous rather than francs."

"That?" cried the woman, very indignant. "That? But look at this material, this background. It is famous, I tell you—I took it to an expert. At the public sale it

might, perhaps, bring a thousand francs. My idea is that it is the picture of some renowned person. An actor or a former Minister. In fact, some historic person."

"But one must take one's chance," Bernardet replied in a jeering tone. "But one hundred francs is one hundred francs. Too much for me. Who sold you the painting?"

The woman went around behind the counter and opened a drawer, from which she took a notebook, in which she kept a daily record of her sales. She turned over the leaves.

"November 12, a small oval painting bought——" She readjusted her spectacles as if to better decipher the name.

"I did not write the name myself; the man wrote it himself." She spelled out:

"Charles—Charles Breton—Rue de la Condamine, 16——"

"Charles Breton," Bernardet repeated; "who is this Charles Breton? I would like to know if he painted this portrait, which seems like a family portrait, and has come to sell it——"

"You know," interrupted the woman, "that that often happens. It is business. One buys or one sells all in good time."

"And this Breton; how old was he?"

"Oh, young. About thirty years old. Very good looking. Dark, with a full beard."

"Did anything about him especially strike you?"

"Nothing!" the woman shortly replied. She had become tired of these questions and looked at the little man with a troubled glance.

Bernardet readily understood; and assuming a paternal, a beaming air, he said with his sweet smile:

"I will not *fence* any more; I will tell you the truth. I am a Police Inspector, and I find that this portrait strangely resembles a man whom we have under lock and key. You understand that it is very important I should know all that is to be ascertained about this picture."

"But I have told you all I know, Monsieur," said the

shopkeeper. "Charles Breton, Rue de la Condamine, 16; that is the name and address. I paid 20 francs for it. There is the receipt—read it, I beg. It is all right. We keep a good shop. Never have we, my late husband and I, been mixed with anything unlawful. Sometimes the bric-à-brac is soiled, but our hands and consciences have always been clean. Ask anyone along the street about the Widow Colard. I owe no one and everyone esteems me——"

"I do not accuse you, Madame Colard, and I have said only what I wished to say. I do not suspect you of receiving stolen goods; I do not doubt your good faith. I repeat my question. How much do you want for this picture?"

"Twenty francs, if you please. That is what it cost me. I do not wish to have it draw me into anything troublesome. Take it for nothing, if that pleases you."

"Not at all! I intend to pay you. Of what are you thinking, Madame Colard?"

The shopwoman had, like all people of a certain class, a horror of the police. The presence of a police inspector in her house seemed at once a dishonor and a menace. She felt herself vaguely under suspicion, and she felt an impulse to shout aloud her innocence.

"Once more," said Bernardet, "did nothing in his face strike you?"

"Nothing!" Mme. Colard responded.

She reflected a moment.

"Ah! yes; perhaps. The shape of his hat. A felt hat with wide brim, something like those worn in South America or Kareros. You know, the kind they call sombrero. The only thing I said to myself was, 'This is probably some returned traveler,' and if I had not seen at the bottom of the picture Bordeaux, I should have thought that this might be the portrait of some Spaniard, some Peruvian."

Bernardet looked straight into Mme. Colard's spectacles and listened intently, and he suddenly remembered what Moniche had said of the odd appearance of the man who had, like the woman in black, called on M. Rovère.

"Some accomplice!" thought Bernardet.

He again asked Mme. Colard the price of the plume.

"Anything you please," said the woman, still frightened.

Bernardet smiled.

"Come! come! What do you want for it? Fifty francs, eh? Fifty?"

"Keep your fifty francs! I place it at your disposal for nothing if you need it."

Bernardet paid the sum he had named. He had always exactly as of principle, a fifty-franc note in his pocket-book. Very little money, a few white pieces, but always this note in reserve. One could never tell what might hinder him in his researches. He paid, then, this heavy sibling that in all probability Mme. Colard would soon be dead before the Examining Magistrate to tell him about the Charles Breton.

"I cannot say anything else, for I do not know anything else," said the huge widow, whose breast heaved with emotion.

Bernardet hesitated a moment upon leaving the shop, then he said to himself that, in a case like this, moments were precious, an hour lost was time wasted, and that as the address which Breton had given was not far away, he would go there first. "Rue de la Condamine, 67," then was only a short walk to such a tramper as he was.

He turned toward the street and number given. It was a large house several stories high. The concierge was sweeping the stairs, having left a card bearing this inscription tacked on the front door: "The porter is on the upper floor." Bernardet hastened up the stairs, found the man and questioned him. There was no Charles Breton in the house; there never had been. The man who said the portmanteau had given a false name and address. Vainly did the police officer describe the individual who had entered Mme. Colard's shop. The man insisted that he had never seen anyone who in the least resembled this traveller in the big felt hat. It was useless to insist. Mme. Colard had been deceived. And now, how to find, in this immense city of

Paris, this bird of passage, who had chanced to enter the bric-à-brac shop. The old adage of "the needle in the haystack" came to Bernardet's mind and greatly irritated him. But, after all, there had been others whom he looked for; there had been others whom he had found, and probably he might still be able to find another trail. He had a collaborator who seldom failed him—Chance! It was destiny which often aided him.

Bernardet took an omnibus in his haste to return to his chief. He was anxious to show his "find" to M. Leriche. When he reached the Préfecture he was immediately received. He unwrapped the portrait and showed it to M. Leriche.

"But that is Dantin!" cried the Chief.

"Is it not?"

"Without doubt! Dantin when younger, but assuredly Dantin! And where did you dig this up?"

Bernardet related his conversation with Mme. Colard and his fruitless visit to the Rue de la Condamine.

"Oh, never mind," said M. Leriche. "This discovery is something. The man who sold this picture and Dantin are accomplices. Bravo, Bernardet! We must let M. Ginory know."

The Examining Magistrate was, like the Chief and Bernardet, struck with the resemblance of the portrait to Dantin. His first move would be to question the prisoner about the picture. He would go at once to Mazas. M. Leriche and Bernardet should accompany him. The presence of the police spy might be useful, even necessary.

The Magistrate and the Chief entered a fiacre, while Bernardet mounted beside the driver. Bernardet said nothing, although the man tried to obtain some information from him. After one or two monosyllabic answers, the driver mockingly asked:

"Are you going to the Souricière (trap) to tease some fat rat?"

M. Ginory and M. Leriche talked together of the *Walkyrie,* of Bayreuth; and the Chief asked, through polite-

ness, for news about his candidature to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

"Do not let us talk of the Institute," the Magistrate replied. "It is like the beginning of a hunt; to sigh for the prize that brings unhappiness."

The somber pile, the Mazas, opened its doors to the three men. They traversed the long corridors, with the heavy air which pervaded them in spite of all efforts to the contrary, to a small room, sparsely furnished (a table, a few chairs, a glass bookcase), which served as an office for the Examining Magistrates when they had to hold any interviews with the prisoners.

The guardian-in-chief walked along with M. Ginory, M. Leriche followed them, and Bernardet respectfully brought up the rear.

"Bring in Jacques Dantin!" M. Ginory ordered. He seated himself at the table. M. Leriche took a chair at one side, and Bernardet stood near the little bookcase, next the only window in the room.

Jacques Dantin soon appeared, led in by two guards in uniform. He was very pale, but still retained his haughty air and his defiant attitude. The Magistrate saluted him with a slight movement of the head, and Dantin bowed, recognizing in Bernardet the man with whom he had walked and conversed behind Rovère's funeral car.

"Be seated, Dantin," M. Ginory said, "and explain to me, I beg, all you know about this portrait. You ought to recognize it."

He quickly held the picture before Dantin's eyes, wishing to scrutinize his face to see what sudden emotion it would display. Seeing the portrait, Dantin shivered and said in a short tone: "It is a picture which I gave to Rovère."

"Ah!" said M. Ginory, "you recognize it then?"

"It is my portrait," Jacques Dantin declared. "It was made a long time ago. Rovère kept it in his salon. How did it come here?"

"Ah!" again said the Magistrate. "Explain that to me!"

M. Ginory seemed to wish to be a little ironical. But Dantin roughly said:

"M. le Juge, I have nothing to explain to you. I understand nothing, I know nothing. Or, rather, I know that in your error—an error which you will bitterly regret some day or other, I am sure—you have arrested me, shut me up in Mazas; but that which I can assure you of is, that I have had nothing, do you hear, nothing whatever to do with the murder of my friend, and I protest with all my powers against your processes."

"I comprehend that!" M. Ginory coldly replied. "Oh! I understand all the disagreeableness of being shut up within four walls. But, then, it is very simple! In order to go out, one has only to give to the one who has a right to know the explanations which are asked. Do you still persist in your system? Do you still insist on keeping, I know not what secret, which you will not reveal to us?"

"I shall keep it, Monsieur. I have reflected," said Dantin. "Yes, I have reflected, and in the solitude to which you have forced me I have examined my conscience." He spoke with firmness, less violently than at the Palais de Justice, and Bernardet's penetrating little eyes never left his face; neither did the Magistrate's, nor the Chief's.

"I am persuaded," Dantin continued, "that this miserable mistake cannot last long, and you will recognize the truth. I shall go out, at least from here, without having abused a confidence which one has placed in me and which I intend to preserve."

"Yes," said M. Ginory, "perfectly, I know your system. You will hold to it. It is well. Now, whose portrait is that?"

"It is mine!"

"By whom do you think it was possible that it could have been sold in the bric-à-brac shop where it was found."

"I know nothing about it. Probably by the one who found it or stole it from M. Rovère's apartment, and who is probably, without the least doubt, his assassin."

"That seems very simple to you?"

"It seems very logical."

"Suppose that this should be the exact truth, that does not detract from the presumption which implicates you, and from Mme. Moniche's deposition, which charges you——"

"Yes, yes, I know. The open safe, the papers spread out, the tête-à-tête with Rovère, when the concierge entered the room—that signifies nothing!"

"For you, perhaps! For Justice it has a tragic signification. But let us return to the portrait. It was you, I suppose, who gave it to Rovère?"

"Yes, it was I," Dantin responded. "Rovère was an amateur in art, moreover my intimate friend. I had no family, I had an old friend, a companion of my youth, who I thought would highly prize that painting. It is a fine one—it is by Paul Baudry."

"Ah!" said M. Ginory. "P. B. Those are Baudry's initials?"

"Certainly. After the war—when I had done my duty like others, I say this without any intention of defending myself—Paul Baudry was at Bordeaux. He was painting some portraits on panels, after Holbein—Edmond About's among others. He made mine. It is this one which I gave Rovère—the one you hold in your hands."

The Magistrate looked at the small oval painting, and M. Leriche put on his eyeglasses to examine the quality of the painting. A Baudry!

"What are these scratches around the edge as if nails had been drawn across the places?" M. Ginory asked. He held out the portrait to Dantin.

"I do not know. Probably where the frame was taken off."

"No, no! They are rough marks; I can see that. The picture has been literally torn from the frame. You ought to know how this panel was framed."

"Very simply when I gave it to Rovère. A narrow gilt frame, nothing more."

"Had Rovère changed the frame?"

"I do not know. I do not remember. When I was at

his apartment the last few times I do not remember to have seen the Baudry. I have thought of it, but I have no recollection of it."

"Then you cannot furnish any information about the man who sold this portrait?"

"None whatever!"

"We might bring you face to face with that woman."

"So be it! She certainly would not recognize me."

"In any case, she will tell us about the man who brought the portrait to her."

"She might describe him to me accurately, and even paint him for me," said Dantin quickly. "She can neither insinuate that I know him nor prove to you that I am his accomplice. I do not know who he is nor from where he comes. I was even ignorant of his existence myself a quarter of an hour ago."

"I have only to remand you to your cell," said the Magistrate. "We will hunt for the other man."

Dantin, in his turn, said in an ironical tone: "And you will do well!"

M. Ginory made a sign. The guards led out their prisoner. Then, looking at the Chief, while Bernardet still remained standing like a soldier near the window, the Magistrate said:

"Until there are new developments Dantin will say nothing. We must look for the man in the sombrero."

XII

It seemed certain to Bernardet that Dantin, although guilty, had an accomplice. Yes, without doubt, the man with the sombrero, the seller of the portrait. Where could he now be in hiding?

"Not easy," Bernardet repeated the words: "Not easy; no, not easy at all to run him out of his rabbit hutch."

The Woman in Black, the visitor, would be another important clew. On this side the situation seemed a simple

one. Or was this woman also an accomplice, and would she remain silent, hidden in the Province? Or would the death of Rovère draw her to Paris, where she might be recognized and become a witness for Justice?

He did not renounce for an instant the hope of finding the man who had sold the picture. It was not the first time that he had picked the needle from a cartful of hay. Paris is large, but this human sea has its particular currents, as the ocean has special tides, and the police officer knew it well. Here or there, some day he would meet the man, cast up by the torrent like a waif.

First of all, the man was probably a stranger from some foreign land. Wearing a hat like a Spaniard, he had not had time to change the style of dress of the country from which he had come in search of adventures. Bernardet haunted the hotels, searched the registers, made conversation with the lodgers. He found poor persons who had come from foreign countries, but whose motives for coming to Paris were all right. Bernardet never stopped searching a moment; he went everywhere, curious and prying—and it pleased him, when he found a leisure evening, to go to some of the strange wineshops or alehouses (called cabarets) to find subjects for observation. These cabarets are very numerous on the outskirts of Montmartre, in the streets and boulevards at the foot of the Butte. Bizarre inventions, original and disagreeable creations, where the ingenuity of the enterprisers sometimes made them hideous in order to attract; to cater to the idle, and to hold the loungers from among the higher classes. Cabarets born of the need for novelty, which might stimulate the blasé; the demand for something eccentric almost to morbid irony. A Danse Macabre trod to the measures of an operetta; pleasantries of the bunglers adopting the cure-alls of the saw-bones, and juggling with their empty heads while dreaming the dreams of a Hamlet.

Cabaret du Squelette!

The announcement of the droll promises—apparitions, visions, phantoms—had often made him smile when he

passed near there to go to the Préfecture; this wineshop, the front of which was bordered with black, like a letter announcing a death, and which bore, grating as it swung at the end of an iron rod, a red lantern for a sign.

His little girls, when he laughingly spoke of the cabaret where the waiters were dressed like undertakers' assistants, turned pale, and plump little Mme. Bernardet, ordinarily smiling, would say with a sigh: "Is it possible that such sacrilegious things are permitted in the quarter?"

Bernardet good-naturedly replied: "Ah, my dear, where is the harm?"

"I know what I am talking about," his good wife said; "they are the pleasure of the unhealthy-minded. They mock at death as they mock at everything else. Where will it all end? We shall see it——"

"Or we shall not see it," interrupted her husband laughingly.

He went in there one evening, having a little time to himself, as he would have gone into a theater. He knew something about this Cabaret du Squelette (meaning the wineshop of the skeleton). He found the place very droll.

A small hall which had a few months before been a common wineshop had been transformed into a lugubrious place. The walls were painted a dead black, and were hung with a large number of paintings—scenes from masked balls, gondola parades, serenades with a balcony scene, some of the lovers' rendezvous of Venice and an ideal view of Granada, with couples gazing at each other and sighing in the gondolas on the lagoons, or in the Andalusian courts —and in this strange place with its romantic pictures, souvenirs of Musset or of Carlo Gozzi, the tables were made in the form of coffins with lighted candles standing upon them, and the waiters were dressed as undertakers' assistants, with shiny black hats trimmed with crape, on their heads.

"What poison will you drink before you die?" asked one of the creatures of Bernardet.

Bernardet sat and gazed about him. A few "high-

flyers" from the other side of Paris were there. Here and there a thief from that quarter sat alone at a table. Some elegants in white cravats, who had come there in correct evening dress, were going later, after the opera, to sup with some première. The police officer understood very well why the blasé came there. They wished to jog their jaded appetites; they sought to find some *piment,* a curry, spice to season the tameness of their daily existence. The coffin-shaped tables upon which they leaned their elbows amused them. Several of them had asked for a *bavaroise,* as they were on milk diet.

They pointed out to each other the gas flaming from the jets fashioned in the form of a broken shin-bone.

"A little patience, my friends," said a sort of manager, who was dressed in deep mourning. "Before long we will adjourn to the Cave of Death!"

The drinkers in white cravats shouted. Bernardet experienced, on the contrary, what Mme. Bernardet would have called a "creepy" sensation. Seasoned as he was to the bloody and villainous aspect of crime, he felt the instinctive shrinking of a healthy and level-headed bourgeois against these drolleries of the brain-diseased upper class and the pleasantries of the blasé decadents.

At a certain moment, and after an explanation given by the manager, the gas was turned off and the lovers in the gondolas, the guitar players, the singers of Spanish songs, the dancers infatuated with the Moulin Rouge, changed suddenly in sinister fashion. In place of the blond heads and rosy cheeks, skulls appeared; the smiles became grins which showed the teeth in their fleshless gums. The bodies, clothed in doublets, in velvets and satins, a moment ago, were made by some interior illumination to change into hideous skeletons. In his mocking tones the manager explained and commented on the metamorphosis, adding to the funeral spectacle the pleasantry of a buffoon.

"See! diseased Parisians, what you will be on Sunday!"

The light went out suddenly; the skeletons disappeared; the sighing lovers in the gondolas on the lagoons of Venice

reappeared; the Andalusian sweethearts again gazed into each other's eyes and sang their love songs. Some of the women laughed, but the laughs sounded constrained.

"Droll! this city of Paris," Bernardet thought. He sat there, leaning back against the wall, where verses about death were printed among the white tears—as in those lodges of Free Masons where an outsider is shut up in order to give him time to make his will—when the door opened and Bernardet saw a tall young man of stalwart and resolute mien enter. A black, curly beard surrounded his pale face. As he entered he cast a quick glance around the hall, the air of which was rather thick with cigar smoke. He seemed to be about thirty years of age, and had the air of an artist, a sculptor, or a painter together with something military in his carriage. But what suddenly struck Bernardet was his hat, a large gray felt hat, with a very wide brim, like the sombreros which the bull-fighters wear.

Possibly, a few people passing through Paris might be found wearing such hats. But they would probably be rare, and in order to find the seller of Jacques Dantin's portrait, Bernardet had only this one clew.

"Oh! such a mean, little, weak clew! But one must use it, just the same!" Bernardet had said.

What if this young man with the strange hat was, by chance, the unknown for whom he was seeking? It was not at all probable. No, when one thought of it—not at all probable. But truth is sometimes made up of improbabilities, and Bernardet again experienced the same shock, the instinctive feeling that he had struck the trail, which he felt when the young man entered the wineshop.

"That hat!" murmured Bernardet, sipping his wine and stealing glances over the rim of his glass at the young man. The unknown seemed to play directly into the police officer's hand. After standing by the door a few moments, and looking about the place, he walked over to the coffin-shaped table at which Bernardet was seated, bringing himself face to face with the officer. One of the waiters in

his mourning dress came to take his order, and lighted another candle, which he placed where its rays fell directly on the young man's face. Thus Bernardet was able to study him at his ease. The pale face, with its expression, uneasy and slightly intense, struck Bernardet at once. That white face, with its black beard, with its gleaming eyes, was not to be passed by with a casual glance. The waiter placed a glass of brandy before him; he placed his elbows on the table and leaned his chin upon his hands. He was evidently not an habitué of the place nor a resident of the quarter. There was something foreign about his appearance. His glance was steady, as that of one who searches the horizon, looks at running water, contemplates the sea, asking for some "good luck" of the unknown.

"It would be strange," thought Bernardet, "if a simple hat and no other clew should put us upon the track of the man for whom we are searching."

At once, with the ingenuity of a master of dramatic art, the agent began to plot, and to put into action what lawyers, pleading and turning and twisting a cause this way and that, call *an effect*. He waited until the manager informed them that they were about to pass into the Cave of Death, and gave them all an invitation into the adjoining hall; then, profiting by the general movement, he approached the unknown, and, almost shoulder to shoulder, he walked along beside him, through a narrow, dark passage to a little room, where, on a small stage, stood, upright, an empty coffin.

It was a doleful spectacle, which the Cabaret du Squelette offered to its clientèle of idle loungers and morbid curiosity seekers attracted to its halls by these exhibitions. Bernardet knew it all very well, and he knew by just what play of lights, what common chemical illuminations, they gave to the lookers-on the sinister illusion of the decomposition of a corpse in its narrow home. This phantasmagoria, to which the people from the Boulevard came, in order to be amused, he had seen many times in the little theaters in the fairs at Neuilly. The proprietor of the cabaret had explained it to him; he had been curious

and very keen about it, and so he followed the crowd into this little hall, to look once more at the image of a man in the coffin. He knew well to what purpose he could put it. The place was full. Men and women were standing about; the black walls made the narrow place look still smaller. Occasional bizarre pleasantries were heard and nervous laughs rang out. Why is it, that no matter how skeptical people may be, the idea, the proximity, the appearance of death gives them an impression of uneasiness, a singular sensation which is often displayed in nervous laughs or sepulchral drolleries?

Bernardet had not left the side of the young man with the gray felt hat. He could see his face distinctly in the light of the little hall, and could study it at his ease. In the shadows which lurked about them the young man's face seemed like a white spot. The officer's sharp eyes never left it for a moment.

The manager now asked if someone would try the experiment. This was to step into the open coffin—that box, as he said—"from which your friends, your neighbors, can see you dematerialize and return to nothingness."

"Come, my friends," he continued, in his ironical tones, "this is a fine thing; it will permit your best friends to see you deliquesce! Are there any married people here? It is only a question of tasting, in advance, the pleasures of a widowhood. Would you like to see your husband disappear, my sister? My brother, do you wish to see your wife decompose? Sacrifice yourselves, I beg of you! Come! Come up here! Death awaits you!"

They laughed, but here and there a laugh sounded strident or hysterical; the laugh did not ring true, but had the sound of cracked crystal. No one stirred. This parody of death affected even these hardened spectators.

"Oh, well, my friends, there is a cadaver belonging to the establishment which we can use. It is a pity! You may readily understand that we do not take the dead for companions."

As no one among the spectators would enter the coffin,

the manager, with a gesture, ordered one of the supernumeraries of the cabaret to enter; from an open door the figurant glided across the stage and entered the coffin, standing upright. The manager wrapped him about with a shroud, leaving only the pale face of the pretended dead man exposed above this whiteness. The man smiled.

"He laughs, Messieurs, he laughs still!" said the manager. "You will soon see him pay for that laugh. '*Rome rit et mourut!*' as Bossuet said."

Some of the audience shouted applause to this quotation from a famous author. Bernardet did not listen; he was studying from a corner of his eye his neighbor's face. The man gazed with a sort of fascination at this fantastic performance which was taking place before him. He frowned, he bit his lips; his eyes were almost ferocious in expression. The figurant in the coffin continued to laugh.

"Look! look keenly!" went on the manager, "you will see your brother dematerialize after becoming changed in color. The flesh will disappear and you will see his skeleton. Think, think, my brothers, this is the fate which awaits you, perhaps soon, on going away from here; think of the various illnesses and deaths by accidents which await you! Contemplate the magic spectacle offered by the Cabaret du Squelette and remember that you are dust and that to dust you must return! Make, wisely, this reflection, which the intoxicated man made to another man in like condition, but asleep. 'And that is how I shall be on Sunday!' While waiting, my brothers and sisters, for nothingness, look at the dematerialization of your contemporary, if you please!"

The play of lights, while the man was talking, began to throw a greenish pallor and to make spots at first transparent upon the orbits of the eyes, then, little by little, the spots seemed to grow stronger, to blacken, to enlarge. The features, lightly picked out, appeared to change gradually, to take on gray and confused tints, to slowly disappear as under a veil, a damp vapor which covered, devoured that face, now unrecognizable! It has been said that the man-

ner in which this phenomenon was managed was a remarkable thing; it is true, for this human body seemed literally to dissolve before this curious crowd, now become silent and frightened. The work of death was accomplished there publicly, thanks to the illusion of lighting. The livid man who smiled a few moments before was motionless, fixed, then passing through some singular changes, the flesh seemed to fall from him in——

Suddenly the play of lights made him disappear from the eyes of the spectators and they saw, thanks to reflections made by mirrors, only a skeleton. It was the world of specters and the secret of the tombs revealed to the crowd by a kind of scientific magic lantern.

Bernardet did not desire to wait longer to strike his blow —this was the exact moment to do it—the psychological moment!

The eager look of the man in the sombrero revealed a deep trouble. There was in this look something more than the curiosity excited by a novel spectacle. The muscles of his pale face twitched as with physical suffering; in his eyes Bernardet read an internal agony.

"Ah!" thought the police officer, "the living eye is a book which one can read, as well as a dead man's eye."

Upon the stage the lights were rendering even more sinister the figurant who was giving this morbidly curious crowd the comedy of death. One would have now thought it was one of those atrocious paintings made in the studios of certain Spanish painters in the *putridero* of a Valles Leal. The flesh, by a remarkable scientific combination of lights, was made to seem as if falling off, and presented the horrible appearance of a corpse in a state of decomposition. The lugubrious vision made a very visible shudder pass over the audience. Then Bernardet, drawing himself up to his full height so as to get a good view of the face of this man so much taller, and approaching as near to him as possible, in fact, so that his elbow and upper arm touched the young man's, he slowly, deliberately dropped, one by one, these words:

"That is about how M. Rovère ought to be now——"

And suddenly the young man's face expressed a sensation of fright, as one sees in the face of a pedestrian who suddenly finds that he is about to step upon a viper.

"Or how he will be soon!" added the little man, with an amiable smile. Bernardet dissimulated under this amiability an intense joy. Holding his arm and elbow in an apparently careless manner close to his neighbor as he pronounced Rovère's name, Bernardet felt his neighbor's whole body tremble, and that he gave a very perceptible start. Why had he been so quickly moved by an unknown name if it had not recalled to his mind some frightful thought? The man might, of course, know, as the public did, all the details of the crime, but, with his strong, energetic face, his resolute look, he did not appear like a person who would be troubled by the recital of a murder, the description of a bloody affray, or even by the frightful scene which had just passed before his eyes in the hall.

"A man of that stamp is not chicken-hearted," thought Bernardet. "No! no!" Hearing those words evoked the image of the dead man, Rovère; the man was not able to master his violent emotion, and he trembled, as if under an electrical discharge. The shudder had been violent, of short duration, however, as if he had mastered his emotion by his strong will. In his involuntary movement he had displayed a tragic eloquence. Bernardet had seen in the look, in the gesture, in the movement of the man's head, something of trouble, of doubt, of terror, as in a flash of lightning in the darkness of night one sees the bottom of a pool.

Bernardet smilingly said to him:

"This sight is not a gay one!"

"No," the man answered, and he also attempted to smile.

He looked back to the stage, where the somber play went on.

"That poor Rovère!" Bernardet said.

The other man now looked at Bernardet as if to read his thoughts and to learn what signification the repetition of the

same name had. Bernardet sustained, with a naïve look, this mute interrogation. He allowed nothing of his thoughts to be seen in the clear, childlike depths of his eyes. He had the air of a good man, frightened by a terrible murder, and who spoke of the late victim as if he feared for himself. He waited, hoping that the man would speak.

In some of Bernardet's readings he had come across the magic rule applicable to love: "Never go! Wait for the other to come!"—"*Nec ire, fac venire*"—applicable also to hate, to that duel of magnetism between the hunted man and the police spy, and Bernardet waited for the other to "come!"

Brusquely, after a silence, while on the little stage the transformation was still going on, the man asked in a dry tone:

"Why do you speak to me of M. Rovère?"

Bernardet affably replied: "I? Because everyone talks of it. It is the actuality of the moment. I live in that quarter. It was quite near there that it happened, the affair——"

"I know!" interrupted the other.

The unknown had not pronounced ten words in questioning and replying, and yet Bernardet found two clews simply insignificant—terrible in reality. "I know!" was the man's reply, in a short tone, as if he wished to push aside, to thrust away, a troublesome thought. The tone, the sound of the words, had struck Bernardet. But one word especially—the word Monsieur before Rovère's name. "Monsieur Rovère? Why did he speak to me of Monsieur Rovère?" Bernardet thought.

It seemed, then, that he knew the dead man.

All the people gathered in this little hall, if asked in regard to this murder, would have said: "Rovère!" "The Rovère affair!" "The Rovère murder!" Not one who had not known the victim would have said:

"Monsieur Rovère!"

The man knew him, then. This simple word, in the officer's opinion, meant much.

The manager now announced that, having become a skeleton, the dear brother who had lent himself to this experiment would return to his natural state, "fresher and rosier than before." He added pleasantly, "A thing which does not generally happen to ordinary skeletons!"

This vulgar drollery caused a great laugh, which the audience heartily indulged in. It made an outlet for their pent-up feelings, and they all felt as if they had awakened from a nightmare. The man in the sombrero, whose pale face was paler than before, was the only one who did not smile. He even frowned fiercely (noted by Bernardet), when the manager added:

"You are not in the habit of seeing a dead man resuscitated the next day. Between us, it would keep the world pretty full."

"Evidently," thought Bernardet, "my young gentleman is ill at ease."

His only thought was to find out his name, his personality, to establish his identity, and to learn where he had spent his life, and especially his last days. But how?

He did not hesitate long. He left the place, even before the man in the coffin had reappeared, smiling at the audience. He glided through the crowd, repeating, "Pardon!" "I beg pardon!" traversed rapidly the hall where newcomers were conversing over their beverages, and stepped out into the street, looked up and down. A light fog enveloped everything, and the gaslights and lights in the shop windows showed ghostly through it. The passers-by, the cabs, the tramways, bore a spectral look.

What Bernardet was searching for was a policeman. He saw two chatting together and walking slowly along under the leafless trees. In three steps, at each step turning his head to watch the people coming out of the cabaret, he reached the men. While speaking to them he did not take his eyes from the door of that place where he had left the young man in the gray felt hat.

"Dagonin," he said, "you must follow me, if you please, and 'pull me in!' I am going to pick a drunken quarrel

with a particular person. Interfere and arrest us both. Understand?"

"Perfectly," Dagonin replied.

He looked at his comrade, who carried his hand to his shako and saluted Bernardet.

The little man, who had given his directions in a quick tone, was already far away. He stood near the door of the cabaret gazing searchingly at each person who came out. The looks he cast were neither direct, menacing, nor even familiar. He had pulled his hat down to his eyebrows, and he cast side glances at the crowd pouring from the door of the wineshop.

He was astonished that the man in the sombrero had not yet appeared. Possibly he had stopped, on his way out, in the front hall. Glancing through the open door, Bernardet saw that he was right. The young man was seated at one of those coffin-shaped oaken tables, with a glass of greenish liquor before him. "He needs alcohol to brace him up," growled the officer.

The door was shut again.

"I can wait till he has finished his absinthe," said Bernardet to himself.

He had not long to wait. After a small number of persons had left the place, the door opened and the man in the gray felt hat appeared, stopped on the threshold, and, as Bernardet had done, scanned the horizon and the street. Bernardet turned his back and seemed to be walking away from the wineshop, leaving the man free. With a keen glance or two over his shoulder toward him, Bernardet crossed the street and hurried along at a rapid pace, in order to gain on the young man, and by this maneuver to find himself directly in front of the unknown. The man seemed to hesitate, walked quickly down the Boulevard a few steps toward the Place Pigalle, in the direction where Rovère's apartments were, but suddenly stopped, turned on his heel, repassed the Cabaret du Squelette, and went toward the Moulin Rouge, which at first, Bernardet thought, he was about to enter. As he stood there the vanes of the Moulin

Rouge, turning about, lighted up the windows of the opposite buildings and made them look as if they were on fire. At last, obeying another impulse, he suddenly crossed the Boulevard, as if to return into Paris, leaving Montmartre, the cabarets, and Rovère's house behind him. He walked briskly along, and ran against a man—a little man—whom he had not noticed, who seemed to suddenly detach himself from the wall, and who fell against his breast, hiccoughing and cursing in vicious tones.

"Imbecile!"

The young man wished to push away the intoxicated man who, with hat over his eyes, clung to him and kept repeating:

"The street—the street—is it not free—the street?"

Yes, it was certainly a drunken man. Not a man in a smock, but a little fellow, a bourgeois, with hat askew and thick voice.

"I—I am not stopping you. The street is free—I tell you!"

"Well, if it is free, I want it!"

The voice was vigorous, but showed sudden anger, a strident tone, a slight foreign accent, Spanish, perhaps.

The drunken man probably thought him insolent, for, still hiccoughing, he answered:

"Oh, you want it, do you? You want it? I want it! The king says 'we wish!' don't you know?"

With another movement, he lost his equilibrium and half fell, his head hanging over, and he clutched the man he held in a sudden embrace.

"It is mine also—the street—you know!"

With sudden violence, the man disembarrassed himself of this caressing creature; he thrust aside his clinging arms with a movement so quick and strong that the intoxicated man, this time, fell, his hat rolled into the gutter, and he lay on the sidewalk.

But immediately, with a bound, he was on his feet, and as the man went calmly on his way, he followed him, seized his coat, and clutched him so tightly that he could not proceed.

"Pardon," he said, "you cannot go away like that!"

Then, as the light from a gas lamp fell on the little man's face, the young man recognized his neighbor of the cabaret, who had said to him:

"See, that is how Rovère must look!"

At this moment, Dagonin and his comrade appeared on the scene and laid vigorous hands on them both; the young man made a quick, instinctive movement toward his right pocket, where, no doubt, he kept a revolver or knife. Bernardet seized his wrist, he twisted it and said:

"Do nothing rash!"

The young man was very strong, but the huge Dagonin had Herculean biceps and the other man did not lack muscles. Fright, moreover, seemed to paralyze this tall, young gallant, who, as he saw that he was being hustled toward a police station, demanded:

"Have you arrested me, and why?"

"First for having struck me," Bernardet replied, still bareheaded, and to whom a gamin now handed his soiled hat, saying to him:

"Is this yours, Monsieur Bernardet?"

Bernardet recognized in his own quarter! That was glory!

The man seemed to wish to defend himself and still struggled, but one remark of Dagonin's seemed to pacify him:

"No resistance! There is nothing serious about your arrest. Do not make it worse."

The young man really believed that it was only a slight matter and he would be liberated at once. The only thing that disquieted him was that this intoxicated man, suddenly become sober, had spoken to him as he did a few moments before in the cabaret.

The four men walked quickly along in the shadow of the buildings, through the almost deserted streets, where the shopkeepers were putting out their lights and closing up their shops. Scarcely anyone who met them would have realized that three of these men were taking the fourth to a police station.

A tri-color flag floated over a door lighted by a red lantern; the four men entered the place and found themselves in a narrow, warm hall, where the agents of the police were either sleeping on benches or reading around the stove by the light of the gas jets above their heads.

Bernardet, looking dolefully at his broken and soiled hat, begged the young man to give his name and address to the Chief of the Post. The young man then quickly understood that his questioner of the Cabaret du Squelette had caught him in a trap. He looked at him with an expression of violent anger—of concentrated rage.

Then he said:

"My name? What do you want of that? I am an honest man. Why did you arrest me? What does it mean?"

"Your name?" repeated Bernardet.

The man hesitated.

"Oh, well! I am called Pradès. Does that help you any?"

The man wrote: "Pradès. P-r-a-d-è-s with an accent. Pradès. First name?"

"Charles, if you wish!"

"Oh!" said Bernardet, noticing the slight difference in the tone of his answer. "We wish nothing. We wish only the truth."

"I have told it."

Charles Pradès furnished some further information in regard to himself. He was staying at a hotel in the Rue de Paradis-Poissonsière, a small hotel used by commercial travelers and merchants of the second class. He had been in Paris only a month.

Where was he from? He said that he came from Sydney, where he was connected with a commercial house. Or rather he had given up the situation to come to Paris to seek his fortune. But while speaking of Sydney he had in his rather rambling answers let fall the name of Buenos Ayres, and Bernardet remembered that Buenos Ayres was the place where M. Rovère had been French Consul. The officer paid no attention to this at the time. For what

good? Pradès' real examination would be conducted by M. Ginory. He, Bernardet, was not an examining magistrate. He was the ferret who hunted out criminals.

This Pradès was stupefied, then furious, when, the examination over, he learned that he was not to be immediately set at liberty.

XIII

M. Ginory was not without uneasiness when he thought of the detention of Jacques Dantin. Without doubt, all prisoners, all accused persons are reticent; they try to hide their guilt under voluntary silence. They do not speak, because they have sworn not to. They are bound, one knows not by whom, by an oath which they cannot break. It is the ordinary system of the guilty who cannot defend themselves. Mystery seems to them safety.

But Dantin, intimately acquainted with Rovère's life, might be acquainted with some secret which he could not disclose and which did not pertain to him at all. What secret? Had not an examining magistrate a right to know everything? Had not an accused man a right to speak? Either Dantin had nothing to reveal and he was playing a comedy and was guilty, or, if by a few words, by a confidence made to the magistrate he could escape an accusation, recover his liberty, without doubt he would speak after having kept an inexplicable silence. How could one suppose that an innocent man would hold, for a long time, to this mute system?

The discovery of the portrait in Mme. Colard's shop ought, naturally, to give to the affair a new turn. The arrest of Charles Pradès brought an important element to these researches. He would be examined by M. Ginory the next morning, after having been questioned by the Commissary of Police.

Bernardet, spruce, freshly shaven, was there, and seemed, in his well-brushed redingote, like a little abbé come to assist at some curious ceremony.

On the contrary, Pradès, after a sleepless night, a night of agony, paler than the evening before, his face fierce and its muscles contracted, had a haggard expression, and he blinked his eyes like a night bird suddenly brought into glaring sunlight. He repeated before the Examining Magistrate what he had said to the brigadier. But his voice, vibrant a few hours before, had become heavy, almost raucous, as the haughty expression of his face had become sullen and tragic.

The Examining Magistrate had cited Mme. Colard, the shopkeeper, to appear before him. She instantly recognized in this Pradès the man who had sold her the little panel by Paul Baudry.

He denied it. He did not know of what they were talking. He had never seen this woman. He knew nothing about any portrait.

"It belonged to M. Rovère," the magistrate replied, "M. Rovère, the murdered man; M. Rovère, who was Consul at Buenos Ayres, and you spoke, yesterday, of Buenos Ayres, in the examination at the station house in the Rue de la Rochefoucald."

"M. Rovère? Buenos Ayres?" repeated the young man, rolling his sombrero around his fingers.

He repeated that he did not know the ex-Consul, had never been in South America, and had come from Sydney.

Bernardet, at this moment, interrupted him by taking his hat from him without saying a word, and Pradès cast a very angry look at the little man.

M. Ginory understood Bernardet's move and approved with a smile. He looked in the inside of the sombrero which Bernardet handed to him.

The hat bore the address of Gordon, Smithson & Co., Berners Street, London.

"But, after all," thought the Magistrate, "Buenos Ayres is one of the markets for English goods."

"That is a hat bought at Sydney," Pradès (who had understood) explained.

Before the bold, decided, almost violent affirmations

which Mme. Colard made that this was certainly the seller of the portrait, the young man lost countenance a little. He kept saying over and over: "You deceive yourself. Madame, I have never spoken to you, I have never seen you."

When M. Ginory asked her if she still persisted in saying that this was the man who had sold her the picture, she said:

"Do I still persist? With my neck under the guillotine I would persist," and she kept repeating: "I am sure of it! I am sure of it!"

This preliminary examination brought about no decisive result. It was certain that, if the portrait had been in the possession of this young man and been sold by him, that he, Charles Pradès, was an accomplice of Dantin's, if not the author of the crime. They ought, then, to be brought face to face, and, possibly, this might bring about an immediate result. And why not have this meeting take place at once, before Pradès was sent where Dantin was, at Mazas?

M. Ginory, who had uttered this word "Mazas," noticed the expression of terror which flashed across and suddenly transfigured the young man's face.

Pradès stammered:

"Then—you will hold me? Then—I am not free?"

M. Ginory did not reply. He gave an order that Pradès should be guarded until the arrival of Dantin from Mazas.

In Mazas, in that walled prison, in the cell which had already made him ill, Jacques Dantin sat. This man, with the trooper's air, seemed almost to be in a state of collapse. When the guard came to his cell he drew himself up and endeavored to collect all his energy; and when the door was opened and he was called he appeared quite like himself. When he saw the prison wagon which had brought him to Mazas and now waited to take him to the Palais de Justice he instinctively recoiled; then, recovering himself, he entered the narrow vehicle.

The idea, the sensation that he was so near all this life—yet so far—that he was going through these streets, filled with carriages, with men and women who were free, gave him a desperate, a nervous sense of irritation.

The air which they breathed, he breathed and felt fan his brow—but through a grating. They arrived at the Palais and Jacques Dantin recognized the staircases which he had previously mounted, that led to the Examining Magistrate's room. He entered the narrow room where M. Ginory awaited him. Dantin saluted the Magistrate with a gesture which, though courteous, seemed to have a little bravado in it; as a salutation with a sword before a duel. Then he glanced around, astonished to see, between two guards, a man whom he did not recognize.

M. Ginory studied them. If he knew this Pradès, who also curiously returned his look, Jacques Dantin was a great comedian, because no indication, not the slightest involuntary shudder, not the faintest trace of an expression of having seen him before, crossed his face. Even M. Ginory's keen eyes could detect nothing. He had asked that Bernardet be present at the meeting, and the little man's face, become serious, almost severe, was turned, with eager interrogation in its expression, toward Dantin. Bernardet also was unable to detect the faintest emotion which could be construed into an acknowledgment of ever having seen this young man before. Generally prisoners would, unconsciously, permit a gesture, a glance, a something, to escape them when they were brusquely confronted, unexpectedly, with some accomplice. This time not a muscle of Dantin's face moved, not an eyelash quivered.

M. Ginory motioned Jacques Dantin to a seat directly in front of him, where the light would fall full upon his face. Pointing out Pradès, he asked:

"Do you recognize this man?"

Dantin, after a second or two, replied:

"No; I have never seen him."

"Never?"

"I believe not; he is unknown to me!"

"And you, Pradès, have you ever seen Jacques Dantin?"

"Never," said Pradès, in his turn. His voice seemed hoarse, compared with the brief, clear response made by Dantin.

" He is, however, the original of the portrait which you sold to Mme Colard."

" The portrait? "

" Look sharply at Dantin. Look at him well," repeated M. Ginory. " You must recognize that he is the original of the portrait in question."

" Yes," Pradès replied, his eyes fixed upon the prisoner.

" Ah! " the Magistrate joyously exclaimed, asking: " And how, tell me, did you so quickly recognize the original of the portrait which you saw only an instant in my room? "

" I do not know," stammered Pradès, not comprehending the gravity of a question put in an insinuating, almost amiable tone.

" Oh, well! " continued M. Ginory, still in a conciliating tone, " I am going to explain to you. It is certain that you recognize these features, because you had a long time in which to contemplate them; because you had it a long time in your hands when you were trying to pull off the frame."

" The frame? What frame? " asked the young man, stupefied, not taking his eyes from the Magistrate's face, which seemed to him endowed with some occult power. M. Ginory went on:

" The frame which you had trouble in removing, since the scratches show in the wood. And what if, after taking the portrait to Mme. Colard's shop, we should find the frame in question at another place, at some other shop—that would not be very difficult," and M. Ginory smiled at Bernardet. " What if we could add another new deposition to that of Mme. Colard's? Yes; what if to that clear, decisive deposition we could add another—what would you have to say? "

Silence! Pradès turned his head around, his eyes wandered about, as if searching to find an outlet or a support; gasping like a man who has been injured.

Jacques Dantin looked at him at the same moment when the Magistrate, with a glance keener, more piercing than ever, seemed to search his very soul. The young man was now pallid and unmanned.

At length Pradès pronounced some words. What did he want of him? What frame was he talking of? And who was this other dealer of whom the Magistrate spoke and whom he had called a second time Where was this witness with "the new deposition"?

"One is enough!" he said, casting a ferocious look at Mme. Colard, who, on a sign from M. Ginory, had entered, pale and full of fear.

He added in a menacing tone:

"One is even too much!"

The fingers of his right hand contracted, as if around a knife handle. At this moment Bernardet, who was studying each gesture which the man made, was convinced that the murderer of Rovère was there. He saw that hand armed with the knife, the one which had been found in his pocket, striking his victim, gashing the ex-Consul's throat.

But then, "Dantin"? An accomplice, without doubt. The head, of which the adventurer was the arm. Because, in the dead man's eye, Dantin's image appeared, reflected as clear proof, like an accusation, showing the person who was last seen in Rovère's supreme agony. Jacques Dantin was there—the eye spoke.

Mme. Colard's testimony no longer permitted M. Ginory to doubt. This Charles Pradès was certainly the man who sold the portrait.

Nothing could be proved except that the two men had never met. No sign of emotion showed that Dantin had ever seen the young man before. The latter alone betrayed himself when he was going to Mazas with the original of the portrait painted by Baudry.

But, however, as the Magistrate underlined it with precision, the fact alone of recognizing Dantin constituted against Pradès a new charge. Added to the testimony, to the formal affirmation of the shopkeeper, this charge became grave.

Coldly, M. Ginory said to his registrar:

"An order!"

Then, when Favarel had taken a paper engraved at the

top, which Pradès tried to decipher, the Magistrate began to question him. And as M. Ginory spoke slowly, Favarel filled in the blank places which made a free man a prisoner.

"You are called?" demanded M. Ginory.

"Pradès."

"Your first name?"

"Henri."

"You said Charles to the Commissary of Police."

"Henri-Charles—Charles—Henri."

The Magistrate did not even make a sign to Favarel, seated before the table, and who wrote very quickly without M. Ginory dictating to him.

"Your profession?" continued the Magistrate.

"Commission merchant."

"Your age?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Your residence?"

"Sydney, Australia."

And, upon this official paper, the replies were filled in, one by one, in the blank places:

COURT OF THE FIRST INSTANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE SEINE:

Warrant of Committment against Pradès.

Note.—Write exactly the names, Christian names, professions, age, residence and nature of charge.

Description
Height metre
centimetres
Forehead
Nose
Eyes
Mouth
Chin
Eyebrows
Hair
General Appearance

We, Edmé-Armand-Georges Ginory, Examining Magistrate of the Court of the First Instance of the Department of the Seine, command and enjoin all officers and guards of the Public Force to conduct to the Prison of Detention, called the Mazas, in conformity to the Law, Pradès (Charles Henri), aged 28 years, Commission Merchant from Sydney. Accused of complicity in the murder of Louis-Pierre Rovère. We direct the Director of said house of detention to receive and hold him till further orders. We command every man in the Public to lend assistance in order to execute the present order, in case such necessity arises, to which we attach our name and seal.

Made at the Palais de Justice, in Paris, the 12th of February, 1896.

And below, the seal was attached to the order by the registrar. M. Ginory signed it, as he did so saying to Favarel:

"The description must be left blank. They will fill it out after the measurements are taken."

Then, Pradès, stupefied till now, not seeming to realize half that was passing around him, gave a sudden, violent start. A cry burst from him.

"Arrested! Have you arrested me?"

M. Ginory leaned over the table. He was calm and held his pen with which he had signed the order, suspended in the air. The young man rushed forward wild with anger, and if the guards had not held him back, he would have seized M. Ginory's fat neck with both hands. The guards held Pradès back, while the Examining Magistrate, carelessly pricking the table with his pen, gently said, with a smile:

"All the same, more than one malefactor has betrayed himself in a fit of anger. I have often thought that it would take very little to get myself assassinated, when I had before me an accused person whom I felt was guilty and who would not confess. Take away the man!"

While they were pushing Pradès toward the corridor he shouted: "*Canailles!*" M. Ginory ordered that Dantin should be left alone with him. "Alone," he said to Bernardet, whose look was a little uneasy. The registrar half rose from his chair, picking up his papers, and pushing them into the pockets of his much-worn paper case.

"No; you may remain, Favarel."

"Well," said the Magistrate in a familiar tone, when he found himself face to face with Jacques Dantin. "Have you reflected?"

Jacques Dantin, his lips pressed closely together, did not reply.

"It is a counselor—a counselor of an especial kind—the cell. He who invented it——"

"Yes," Dantin brusquely interrupted. "The brain suffers between those walls. I have not slept since I went

there. Not slept at all. Insomnia is killing me. It seems as if I should go crazy!"

"Then?" asked M. Ginory.

"Then——"

Jacques Dantin looked fiercely at the registrar, who sat waiting, his pen over his ear, his elbows on the table, his chin on his hands.

"Then, oh, well! Then, here it is, I wish to tell you all—all. But to you—to you——"

"To me alone?"

"Yes," said Dantin, with the same fierce expression.

"My dear Favarel," the Magistrate began.

The registrar had already risen. He slowly bowed and went out.

"Now," said the Magistrate to Jacques Dantin, "you can speak."

The man still hesitated.

"Monsieur," he asked, "will any word said here be repeated, ought it or must it be repeated in a courtroom, at the Assizes, I know not where—anywhere before the public?"

"That depends," said M. Ginory. "But what you know you owe to justice, whether it be a revelation, an accusation, or a confession. I ask it of you."

Still Dantin hesitated. Then the Magistrate spoke these words: "I demand it!"

With a violent effort the prisoner began. "So be it! But it is to a man of honor, rather than to a Magistrate, to whom I address these words. If I have hesitated to speak, if I have allowed myself to be suspected and to be accused, it is because it seemed to me impossible, absolutely impossible, that this same truth should not be revealed—I do not know in what way—that it would become known to you without compelling me to disclose a secret which was not mine."

"To an Examining Magistrate one may tell everything," said M. Ginory. "We have listened to confessions in our offices which are as inviolable as those of the confessional made to a priest."

And now, after having accused Dantin of lying, believing that he was acting a comedy, after smiling disdainfully at that common invention—a vow which one could not break—the perception of a possibility entered the Magistrate's mind that this man might be sincere. Hitherto he had closed his heart against sympathy for this man; they had met in mutual hostility.

The manner in which Jacques Dantin approached the question, the resolution with which he spoke, no longer resembled the obstinate attitude which he had before assumed in this same room.

Reflection, the prison—the cell, without doubt—a frightful and stifling cell—had done its work. The man who had been excited to the point of not speaking now wished to tell all.

"Yes," he said, "since nothing has happened to convince you that I am not lying."

"I am listening to you," said the Magistrate.

Then, in a long, close conference, Jacques Dantin told M. Ginory his story. He related how, from early youth, he and Rovère had been close friends; of the warm affection which had always existed between them; of the shams and deceptions of which he had been guilty; of the bitterness of his ruined life; of an existence which ought to have been beautiful, and which, so useless, the life of a *viveur,* had almost made him—why?—how?—through need of money and a lack of moral sense—almost descend to crime.

This Rovère, whom he was accused of killing, he loved, and, to tell the truth, in that strange and troublous existence which he had lived, Rovère had been the only true friend whom he had known. Rovère, a sort of pessimistic philosopher, a recluse, lycanthropic, after a life spent in feasting, having surfeited himself with pleasure, recognized also in his last years that disinterested affection is rare in this world, and his savage misanthropy softened before Jacques Dantin's warm friendship.

"I continued to search for, in what is called pleasure and what as one's hair whitens becomes vice; in play; in the

uproar of Paris, forgetfulness of life, of the dull life of a man growing old, alone, without home or family, an old, stupid fellow, whom the young people look at with hate and say to each other: 'Why is he still here?' Rovère more and more felt the need of withdrawing into solitude, thinking over his adventurous life, as bad and as ruined as mine, and he wished to see no one. A wolf, a wild boar in his lair! Can you understand this friendship between two old fellows, one of whom tried in every way to direct his thoughts from himself, and the other, waiting death in a corner of his fireside, solitary, unsociable?"

"Perfectly! Go on!"

And the Magistrate, with eyes riveted upon Jacques Dantin, saw this man, excited, making light of this recital of the past; evoking remembrances of forgotten events, of this lost affection; lost, as all his life was.

"This is not a conference, is it not so? You no longer believe that it is a comedy? I loved Rovère. Life had often separated us. He searched for fortune at the other end of the world. I made a mess of mine and ate it in Paris. But we always kept up our relations, and when he returned to France we were happy in again seeing each other. The grayer turned the hair, the more tender the heart became. I had always found him morose—from his twentieth year he always dragged after him a sinister companion—ennui. He had chosen a Consular career, to live far away, and in a fashion not at all like ours. I have often laughingly said to him that he probably had met with unrequited love; that he had experienced some unhappy passion. He said, no! I feigned to believe it. One is not somber and melancholy like that without some secret grief. After all, there are others who do not feel any gayer with a smile on the lips. Sadness is no sign. Neither is gayety!"

His face took on a weary, melancholy expression, which at first astonished the Magistrate; then he experienced a feeling of pity; he listened, silent and grave.

"I will pass over all the details of our life, shall I not? My monologue would be too long. The years of youth

passed with a rapidity truly astonishing; we came to the time when we found ourselves—he weary of life, established in his chosen apartments in the Boulevard de Clichy, with his paintings and books; sitting in front of his fire and awaiting death—I continuing to spur myself on like a foundered horse. Rovère moralized to me; I jeered at his sermons, and I went to sit by his fireside and talk over the past. One of his joys had been this portrait of me, painted by Paul Baudry. He had hung it up in his salon, at the corner of the chimney piece, at the left, and he often said to me:

"'Dost thou know that when thou art not here I talk to it?'

"I was not there very often. Parisian life draws us by its thousand attractions. The days which seem interminable when one is twenty rush by as if on wings when one is fifty. One has not even time to stop to see the friends one loves. At the last moment, if one is right, one ought to say, 'How I have cast to the winds everything precious which life has given me. How foolish I have been—how stupid.' Pay no attention to my philosophisms—the cell! Mazas forces one to think!

"One day—it was one morning—on returning from the club, where I had passed the night stupidly losing sums which would have given joy to hundreds of families, I found on my desk a message from Rovère. If one would look through my papers one would find it there—I kept it. Rovère begged me to come to him immediately. I shivered—a sharp presentiment of death struck me. The writing was trembling, unlike his own. I struck my forehead in anger. This message had been waiting for me since the night before, while I was spending the hours in gambling. If, when I hurried toward the Boulevard de Clichy, I had found Rovère dead on my arrival, I could not, believe me, have experienced greater despair. His assassination seemed to me atrocious; but I was at least able to assure him that his friendship was returned. I hastily read the telegram, threw myself into a fiacre, and hastened to his apartments.

The woman who acted as housekeeper for him, Mme. Moniche, the portress, raising her arms as she opened the door for me, said:

"'Ah, Monsieur! but Monsieur has waited for you. He has repeated your name all night. He nearly died, but he is better now.'

"Rovère, sitting the night before by his fire, had been stricken by lateral paralysis, and as soon as he could hold a pen, in spite of the orders of the physician who had been quickly called, had written and sent the message to me some hours before.

"As soon as he saw me he—the strong man, the mad misanthrope, silent and somber—held me in his arms and burst into tears. His embrace was that of a man who concentrates in one being all that remains of hope.

"'Thou! thou art here!' he said in a low tone. 'If thou knewest!'

"I was moved to the depths of my heart. That manly face, usually so energetic, wore an expression of terror which was in some way almost childish, a timorous fright. The tears rose in his eyes.

"'Oh! how I have waited for thee! how I have longed for thee!'

"He repeated this phrase with anxious obstinacy. Then he seemed to be suffocating. Emotion! The sight of me recalled to him the long agony of that night when he thought that he was about to die without parting with me for the last time.

"'For what I have to tell thee——'

"He shook his head.

"'It is the secret of my life!'

"He was lying on a sort of sick chair or lounge, in the library where he passed his last days with his books. He made me sit down beside him. He took my hand and said:

"'I am going to die. I believed that the end had come last night. I called thee. Oh, well, if I had died there is one being in the world who would not have had the fortune which—I have——'

"He lowered his voice as if he thought we were spied upon, as if someone could hear.

"'I have a daughter. Yes, even from thee I have hidden this secret, which tortures me. A daughter who loves me and who has not the right to confess this tenderness, no more than I have the right to give her my name. Ah! our youth, sad youth! I might have had a home to-day, a fireside of my own, a dear one near me, and instead of that, an affection of which I am ashamed and which I have hidden even from thee, Jacques, from thee, dost thou comprehend?'

"I remember each of Rovère's words as if I was hearing them now. This conversation with my poor friend is among the most poignant yet most precious of my remembrances. With much emotion, which distressed me, the poor man revealed to me the secret which he had believed it his duty to hide from me so many years, and I vowed to him—I swore to him on my honor, and that is why I hesitated to speak, or rather refused to speak, not wishing to compromise anyone, neither the dead nor living —I swore to him, M. le Juge, to repeat nothing of what he told me to anyone, to anyone but to her——"

"Her?" interrogated M. Ginory.

"His daughter," Dantin replied.

The Examining Magistrate recalled that visitor in black, who had been seen occasionally at Rovère's apartments, and the little romance of which Paul Rodier had written in his paper—the romance of the Woman in Black!

"And this daughter?"

"She bears," said Dantin, with a discouraged gesture, "the name of the father which the law gives her, and this name is a great name, an illustrious name, that of a retired general officer, living in one of the provinces, a widower, and who adores the girl who is another man's child. The mother is dead. The father has never known. When dying, the mother revealed the secret to her daughter. She came, by command of the dead, to see Rovère, but as a Sister of Charity, faithful to the name which she

bears. She does not wish to marry; she will never leave the crippled old soldier who calls her his daughter, and who adores her.

"It was I to whom he confided this fortune. He had very little money with his notary. Erratic and distrustful, Rovère kept his valuables in his safe, as he kept his books in his library. It seemed that he was a collector, picking up all kinds of things. Avaricious? No; but he wished to have about him, under his hand, everything which belonged to him. He possibly may have wished to give what he had directly to the one to whom it seemed good to him to give it, and confide it to me in trust.

"I regret not having asked him directly that day what he counted on doing with his fortune and how he intended enriching his child, whom he had not the right to recognize. I dared, or, rather, I did not think of it. I experienced a strong emotion when I saw my friend enfeebled and almost dying. I had known him so different, so handsome. Oh! those poor, sad, restless eyes, that lowered voice, as if he feared an enemy was listening! Illness had quickly, brutally changed that vigorous man, suddenly old and timorous.

"I went away from that first interview much distressed, carrying a secret which seemed to me a heavy and cruel one; and which made me think of the uselessness, the wickedness, the vain loves of a ruined life. But I felt that Rovère owed truly his fortune to that girl who, the next day after the death of the one whom she had piously attended, found herself poor and isolated in a little house in a steep street, near the Château, above Blois. I felt that, whatever this unknown father left, ought not to go to distant relatives, who cared nothing for him; did not even know him; were ignorant of his sufferings and perhaps even of his existence, and who by law would inherit.

"A dying man, yes! There could be no question about it, and Dr. Vilandry, whom I begged to accompany me to see my friend, did not hide it from me. Rovère was dying of a kidney trouble, which had made rapid progress.

"The old workman, burdened with labor throughout the

week, who could promenade on the Boulevard de Clichy on Sunday, with his daughter on his arm, was happier than Rovère. And—a strange thing, sentiment of shame and remorse—feeling himself traveling fast to his last resting-place in the cemetery, he expressed no wish to see that child, to send for her to come from Blois under some pretext or other, easy enough to find.

"No, he experienced a fierce desire for solitude, he shrunk from an interview, in which he feared all his grief would rush to his lips in a torrent of words. He feared for himself, for his weakness, for the strange feeling he experienced in his head.

"'It seems as if it oscillated upon my shoulders,' he said. 'If Marthe came [and he repeated the name as a child would have pronounced it who was just learning to name the letters of a word] I would give her but the sad spectacle of a broken-down man, and leave on her mind only the impression of a human ruin. And then—and then—not to see her! not to have the right to see her! that is all right—it is my chastisement!'

"Let it be so! I understood. I feared that an interview would be mortal. He had been so terribly agitated when he had sent for me that other time.

"But I, at least, wished to recall to him his former wish, which he had expressed, of providing for the girl's future. I desired that he should make up for the past, since money is one of the forms of reparation. But I dared not speak to him again in regard to it, or of that trust of which he had spoken.

"He said to me, this strong man whom death had never frightened, and whom he had braved many times, he said to me now, weakened by this illness which was killing him hour by hour:

"'If I knew that my end was near I would decide—but I have time.'

"Each day the unhappy man's strength failed. I saw it—this human ruin! One morning, when I went to his apartments, I found him in a singular state of terror. He

related me a story, I knew not what, of a thief, whose victim he was; the lock of his door had been forced, his safe opened. Then, suddenly, interrupting himself, he began to laugh, a feeble laugh, which made me ill.

"'I am a fool,' he said. 'I am dreaming, awake—I continue in the daytime the nightmares of the night—a thief here! No one has come—Mme. Moniche has watched—but my head is so weak, so weak! I have known so many rascals in my life! Rascals always return, *hein!*'

"He made a sad attempt at a laugh.

"It was delirium! A delirium which soon passed away, but which frightened me. It returned with increasing force each day, and at shorter intervals.

"'Well,' I said to myself, during a lucid interview, 'he must do what he has resolved to do, what he had willed to do—what he wishes to do!' And I decided—it was the night before the assassination—to bring him to the point, to aid his hesitation. I found him calmer that day. He was lying on his lounge, enveloped in his dressing-gown, with a traveling rug thrown across his thin legs. With his black skullcap and his grayish beard he looked like a dying Doge.

"He held out his bony hand to me, giving me a sad smile, and said that he felt better. A period of remission in his disease, a feeling of comfort pervading his general condition.

"'What if I should recover?' he said, looking me full in the face.

"I comprehended by that ardent look, which was of singular vitality, that this man, who had never feared death, still clung to life. It was instinct.

"I replied that certainly he might, and I even said that he would surely recover, but—with what grievous repugnance did I approach the subject—I asked him if, experiencing the general feeling of ease and comfort which pervaded his being, whether he would not be even more comfortable and happy if he thought of what he ought to

do for that child of whom he had spoken, and for whose future he wished to provide.

"'And since thou art feeling better, my dear Rovère, it is perhaps the opportunity to put everything in order in that life which thou art about to recover, and which will be a new life.'

"He looked fixedly at me with his beautiful eyes. It was a profound regard, and I saw that he divined my thought.

"'Thou art right!' he said firmly; 'no weakness.'

"Then, gathering all his forces, he arose, stood upright, refusing even the arm which I held out to him, and in his dressing-gown, which hung about him, he seemed to me taller, thinner, even handsomer. He took two or three steps, at first a little unsteady, then, straightening up, he walked directly to his safe, turned the letters, and opened it, after having smiled, and said:

"'I had forgotten the word—four letters; it is, however, a little thing. My head is empty.'

"Then, the safe opened, he took out papers—of value, without doubt—papers which he took back to his lounge, spread out on a table near at hand, and said:

"'Let us see! This which I am going to give thee is for her—— A will, yes, I could make a will—but it would create talk—it would be asked what I had done—it would be searched out, dug out of the past, it would open a tomb—I cannot!—— What I have shall be hers, thou wilt give it to her—thou——'

"And his large, haggard eyes searched through the papers.

"'Ah! here!' he said; 'here are some bonds! Egyptian—of a certain value to the holder, at three per cent. I hid that—where did I put it?'

"He picked up the papers, turned them over and over, became alarmed, turned pale.

"'But,' I said to him, 'is it not among those papers?'

"He shrugged his shoulders, displaying with an ironical smile the engraved papers.

"'Some certificates of decorations! The bric-à-brac of a Consular life.'

"Then with renewed energy he again went to the safe, opened the till, pulled it out, and searched again and again.

"Overcome with fright, he exclaimed: 'It is not there!'

"'Why is it not there?'

"And he gave me another look—haggard! terrible! His face was fearfully contracted. He clasped his head with both hands, and stammered, as if coming out of a dream.

"'It is true, I remember—I have hidden it! Yes, I hid it! I do not know where—in some book! In which one?'

"He looked around him with wild eyes. The cerebral anæmia which had made him fear robbery again seized him, and poor Rovère, my old friend, plainly showed that he was enduring the agony of a man who is drowning, and who does not know where to cling in order to save himself.

"He was still standing, but as he turned around, he staggered.

"He repeated in a hoarse, frightened voice: 'Where, where have I hidden that? Fool! The safe did not seem secure enough! Where, where have I put it?'

"It was then, Monsieur, yes, at that moment, that the concierge entered and saw us standing face to face before those papers of which she had spoken. I must have looked greatly embarrassed, very pale, showing the violent emotion which seized me by the throat. Rovère said to her rather roughly: 'What are you here for?' and sent her away with a gesture. Mme. Moniche had had time to see the open safe and the papers spread out, which she supposed were valuable. I understand how she deceived herself, and when I think of it, I accuse myself. There was something tragic taking place between Rovère and me. This woman could not know what it was, but she felt it.

"And it was more terrible, a hundred times more terrible, when she had disappeared. There seemed to be a battle raging in Rovère's brain, as between his will and his weakness. Standing upright, striving not to give way, struggling to concentrate all his brain power in his effort

to remember, to find some trace of the hidden place where he had foolishly put his fortune, between the leaves of some huge book. Rovère called violently, ardently to his aid his last remnant of strength to combat against this anæmia which took away the memory of what he had done. He rolled his eyes desperately, found nothing, remembered nothing.

"This is the truth, Monsieur. I ought to have told you sooner. I repeat that I had the weakness of wishing to keep the vow given to my dear friend."

"That name," said M. Ginory, "I have not asked you."

"I refused it to the Magistrate," said Jacques Dantin, "but I confide it to the man of honor!"

"There is only a Magistrate here," M. Ginory replied, "but the legal inquiry has its secrets, as life has."

And Jacques Dantin gave the name which the one whom Louis-Pierre Rovère called Marthe bore as her rightful name.

XIV

Very often, after his release from prison, Jacques Dantin went to the corner of the cemetery at Montmarte, where his friend lay. And he always carried flowers. It had become to him, since the terrible strain of his detention, a necessity, a habit. The dead are living! They wait, they understand, they listen!

It seemed to Dantin that he had but one aim. Alas! what had been the wish, the last dream of the dead man would never be realized. That fortune which Rovère had intended for the child whom he had no right to call his own would go, was going to some far-off cousins of whose existence the ex-Consul was not even aware perhaps, and whom he certainly had never known—to some indifferent persons, chance relatives, strangers.

"I ought not to have waited for him to tell me what his intentions were regarding his daughter," Dantin often thought. What would become of her, the poor girl, who

knew the secret of her birth and who remained silent, piously devoting herself to the old soldier whose name she bore?

One day in February a sad, gray day, Jacques Dantin, thinking of the past winter so unhappy, of the sad secret grave and heavy, strolled along toward that granite tomb near which Rovère slept. He recalled the curious crowd which had accompanied his dead friend to its last resting place; the flowers; the undercurrent of excitement; the cortège. Silence now filled the place! Dark shadows could be seen here and there between the tombs at the end of the paths. It was not a visiting day nor an hour usual for funerals. This solitude pleased Jacques. He felt near to him whom he loved.

Louis-Pierre Rovère. That name, which Moniche had had engraved, evoked many remembrances for this man who had for a time been suspected of assassinating him. All his childhood, all his youth, all the past! How quickly the years had fled, such ruined years. So much of fever, of agitation—so many ambitions, deceptions, in order to end here.

"He is at rest at least," thought Dantin, remembering his own life, without aim, without happiness. And he also would rest soon, having not even a friend in this great city of Paris whom he could depend upon to pay him a last visit. A ruined, wicked, useless life!

He again bade Rovère good-bye, speaking to him, calling him thee and thou as of old. Then he went slowly away. But at the end of a walk he turned around to look once more at the place where his friend lay. He saw, coming that way, between the tombs, as if by some cross alley, a woman in black, who was walking directly toward the place he had left. He stopped, waiting—yes, it was to Rovère's tomb that she was going. Tall, svelte, and as far as Jacques Dantin could see, she was young. He said to himself:

"It is his daughter!"

The memory of their last interview came to him. He

saw his unhappy friend, haggard, standing in front of his open safe, searching through his papers for those which represented his child's fortune. If this was his friend's daughter, it was to him that Rovère had looked to assure her future.

He walked slowly back to the tomb. The woman in black was now kneeling near the gray stone, bent over, arranging a bouquet of chrysanthemums which she had brought. Dantin could see only her kneeling form and black draperies.

She was praying now!

Dantin stood looking at her, and when at last she arose he saw that she was tall and elegant in her mourning robes. He advanced toward her. The noise of his footsteps on the gravel caused her to turn her head, and Dantin saw a beautiful face, young and sad. She had blond hair and large eyes, which opened wide in surprise. He saw the same expression of the eyes which Rovère's had borne.

The young woman instinctively made a movement as if to go away, to give place to the newcomer. But Dantin stopped her with a gesture.

"Do not go away, Mademoiselle. I am the best friend of the one who sleeps here."

She stopped, pale and timid.

"I know very well that you loved him," he added.

She unconsciously let a frightened cry escape her and looked helplessly around.

"He told me all," Dantin slowly said. "I am Jacques Dantin. He has spoken to you of me, I think——"

"Yes," the young woman answered.

Dantin involuntarily shivered. Her voice had the same *timbre* as Rovère's.

In the silence of the cemetery, near the tomb, before that name, Louis-Pierre Rovère, which seemed almost like the presence of his dead friend, Dantin felt the temptation to reveal to this girl what her father had wished her to know.

They knew each other without ever having met. One word was enough, one name was sufficient, in order that

the secret which united them should bring them nearer each other. What Dantin was to Rovère, Rovère had told Marthe again and again.

Then, as if from the depths of the tomb, Rovère had ordered him to speak. Jacques Dantin, in the solemn silence of that City of the Dead, confided to the young girl what her father had tried to tell him. He spoke rapidly, the words "A legacy—in trust—a fortune" fell from his lips. But the young girl quickly interrupted him with a grand gesture.

"I do not wish to know what anyone has told you of me. I am the daughter of a man who awaits me at Blois, who is old, who loves only me, who needs only me, and I need nothing!"

There was in her tone an accent of command, of resolution, which Dantin recognized as one of Rovère's most remarkable characteristics.

Had Dantin known nothing, this sound in the voice, this ardent look on the pale face, would have given him a hint or a suspicion, and have obliged him to think of Rovère. Rovère lived again in this woman in black whom Jacques Dantin saw for the first time.

"Then?" asked this friend of the dead man, as if awaiting an order.

"Then," said the young girl in her deep voice, "when you meet me near this tomb do not speak to me of anything. If you should meet me outside this cemetery, do not recognize me. The secret which was confided to you by the one who sleeps there, is the secret of a dead one whom I adored—*my mother;* and of a living person whom I reverence—*my father!*"

She accented the words with a sort of tender, passionate piety, and Jacques Dantin saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Now, adieu!" she said.

Jacques still wished to speak of that last confidence of the dying man, but she said again:

"Adieu!"

With her hand, gloved in black, she made the sign of the Cross, smiled sadly as she looked at the tomb where the chrysanthemums lay, then lowering her veil she went away, and Dantin, standing near the gray tomb, saw her disappear at the end of an alley.

The martyr, expiating near the old crippled man a fault of which she was innocent, went back to him who was without suspicion; to him who adored her and to whom she was, in their poor apartment in Blois, his saint and his daughter.

She would watch, she would lose her youth, near that old soldier whose robust constitution would endure many, many long years. She would pay her dead mother's debt; she would pay it by devoting every hour of her life to this man whose name she bore—an illustrious name, a name belonging to the victories, to the struggles, to the history of yesterday—she would be the hostage, the expiatory victim.

With all her life would she redeem the fault of that other!

"And who knows, my poor Rovère," said Jacques Dantin, "thy daughter, proud of her sacrifice, is perhaps happier in doing this!"

In his turn he left the tomb, he went out of the cemetery, he wished to walk to his lodging in the Rue Richelieu. He had only taken a few steps along the Boulevard, where —it seemed but yesterday—he had followed (talking with Bernardet) behind Rovère's funeral carriage, when he nearly ran into a little man who was hurrying along the pavement. The police officer saluted him, with a shaking of the head, which had in it regret, a little confusion, some excuses.

"Ah! Monsieur Dantin, what a grudge you must have against me!"

"Not at all," said Dantin. "You thought that you were doing your duty, and it did not displease me to have you try to so quickly avenge my poor Rovère."

"Avenge him! Yes, he will be! I would not give four sous for Charles Pradès' head to-morrow, when he is

tried. We shall see each other in court. *Au revoir,* Monsieur Dantin, and all my excuses!"

"*Au revoir,* Monsieur Bernardet, and all my compliments!"

The two men separated. Bernardet was on his way home to breakfast. He was late. Mme. Bernardet would be waiting, and a little red and breathless he hurried along. He stopped on hearing a newsboy announce the last number of *Lutèce.*

"Ask for the account of the trial to-morrow: The inquest by Paul Rodier on the crime of the Boulevard de Clichy!"

The newsboy saluted Bernardet, whom he knew very well.

"Give me a paper!" said the police officer. The boy pulled out a paper from the package he was carrying, and waved it over his head like a flag.

"Ah! I understand, that interests you, Monsieur Bernardet!"

And while the little man looked for the heading *Lutèce* in capital letters—the title which Paul Rodier had given to a series of interviews with celebrated physicians—the newsboy, giving Bernardet his change, said:

"To-morrow is the trial. But there is no doubt, is there, Monsieur Bernardet? Pradès is condemned in advance!"

"He has confessed, it is an accomplished fact," Bernardet replied, pocketing his change.

"*Au revoir* and thanks, Monsieur Bernardet."

And the newsboy, going on his way, cried out:

"Ask for *Lutèce*—The Rovère trial! The affair to-morrow! Paul Rodier's inquest on the eye of the dead man!" His voice was at last drowned in the noise of tramways and cabs.

Charles Pradès had really confessed. At Buenos Ayres, the ex-Consul had been associated in a large agricultural enterprise with a man whose hazardous speculations, play, and various adventures had completely ruined him. He left a son of whom the Consul, paying his partner's debts, seemed the nautral protector. John Pradès had committed suicide and commended his son to Rovère's care.

Little by little the solicitations, the unreasonable demands of Charles Pradès, who believed that he had a just claim on his father's old partner, became irritating obsessions to the Consul. Money given him he squandered in play, and Rovère finally cut him off with a last gift. Afterward, however, Pradès followed his benefactor to Paris, made one more demand upon him, which was refused, and killed him in a fit of anger. In his last agony, Rovère had caught at the picture of his lifelong friend and fixed his eyes upon it, and this portrait Pradès took, thinking it was of value. He had to make his escape without looking for anything else.

M. Bernardet hurried on. The little ones would have become impatient, yes, yes, waiting for him, and asking for him around the table at home. He looked at the paper which he had bought. Paul Rodier, in regard to the question which he, Bernardet, had raised, had interviewed savants, physiologists, psychologists, and in good journalistic style had published, the evening before the trial, the result of his inquest.

M. Bernardet read as he hastened along the long titles in capitals in large headlines.

"A Scientific Problem Apropos of the Rovère Affair!"

"Questions of Medical Jurisprudence!"

"The Eye of the Dead Man!"

"Interviews and Opinions of MM. les Docteurs Brouardel, Roux, Duclaux, Pean, Robin, Pozzi, Blum, Widal, Gilles de la Tourette——"

Bernardet turned the leaves. The interviews filled two pages at least in solid columns.

"So much the better! So much the better!" said the police officer, enchanted. And hastening along even faster, he said to himself:

"I am going to read all that to the children; yes, all that—it will amuse them—life is a romance like any other! More incredible than any other! And these questions; the unknown, the invisible, all these problems—how interesting they are! And the mystery—so amusing!"

Short Stories

Short Stories

Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant

The Necklace

SHE was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as though she had really fallen from her proper station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank; and beauty, grace, and charm act instead of family and birth. Natural fineness, instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are the sole hierarchy, and make from women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

She suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born for all the delicacies and all the luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look of the walls, from the worn-out chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble housework aroused in her regrets which were despairing, and distracted dreams. She thought of the silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, lit by tall bronze candelabra, and of the two great footmen in knee breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the hot-air stove. She thought of the long *salons* fitted up with ancient silk, of the

delicate furniture carrying priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for talks at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth three days old, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup tureen and declared with an enchanted air, "Ah, the good *pot-au-feu*! I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry which peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvelous plates, and of the whispered gallantries which you listen to with a sphinx-like smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she felt made for that. She would so have liked to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go and see any more, because she suffered so much when she came back.

But, one evening, her husband returned home with a triumphant air, and holding a large envelope in his hand.

"There," said he, "here is something for you."

She tore the paper sharply, and drew out a printed card which bore these words:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Ramponneau request the honor of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

"What do you want me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had

awful trouble to get it. Everyone wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there."

She looked at him with an irritated eye, and she said, impatiently:

"And what do you want me to put on my back?"

He had not thought of that; he stammered:

"Why, the dress you go to the theater in. It looks very well, to me."

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was crying. Two great tears descended slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth. He stuttered:

"What's the matter? What's the matter?"

But, by a violent effort, she had conquered her grief, and she replied, with a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no dress, and therefore I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I."

He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable dress, which you could use on other occasions, something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally, she replied, hesitatingly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He had grown a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks down there of a Sunday.

But he said:

"All right. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty dress."

The day of the ball drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you've been so queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look like distress. I should almost rather not go at all."

He resumed:

"You might wear natural flowers. It's very stylish at this time of the year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."

But her husband cried:

"How stupid you are! Go look up your friend Mme. Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're quite thick enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy:

"It's true. I never thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend and told of her distress.

Mme. Forestier went to a wardrobe with a glass door, took out a large jewel box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Mme. Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first of all some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross, gold and precious stones of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the glass, hesitated, could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"Haven't you any more?"

"Why, yes. Look. I don't know what you like."

All of a sudden she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb necklace of diamonds, and her heart began to beat with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she

took it. She fastened it around her throat, outside her high-necked dress, and remained lost in ecstasy at the sight of herself.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anguish:

"Can you lend me that, only that?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She sprang upon the neck of her friend, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mme. Loisel made a great success. She was prettier than them all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and crazy with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, endeavored to be introduced. All the attachés of the Cabinet wanted to waltz with her. She was remarked by the minister himself.

She danced with intoxication, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, of all this admiration, of all these awakened desires, and of that sense of complete victory which is so sweet to woman's heart.

She went away about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight, in a little deserted anteroom, with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a very good time.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps which he had brought, modest wraps of common life, whose poverty contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wanted to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back.

"Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will go and call a cab."

But she did not listen to him, and rapidly descended the stairs. When they were in the street they did not find a carriage; and they began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen whom they saw passing by at a distance.

They went down toward the Seine, in despair, shivering

with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient noctambulent coupés which, exactly as if they were ashamed to show their misery during the day, are never seen round Paris until after nightfall.

It took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and once more, sadly, they climbed up homeward. All was ended for her. And as to him, he reflected that he must be at the Ministry at ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps, which covered her shoulders, before the glass, so as once more to see herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She had no longer the necklace around her neck!

Her husband, already half undressed, demanded:

"What is the matter with you?"

She turned madly toward him:

"I have—I have—I've lost Mme. Forestier's necklace."

He stood up, distracted.

"What!—how?—Impossible!"

And they looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. They did not find it.

He asked:

"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?"

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the palace."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. Probably. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you, didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They looked, thunderstruck, at one another. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route which we have taken, to see if I can't find it."

And he went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to Police Headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies—everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least suspicion of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face; he had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace that ornament."

The next day they took the box which had contained it, and they went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, sick both of them with chagrin and with anguish.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they looked for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs in case they found the other one before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers,

and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing if he could meet it; and, frightened by the pains yet to come, by the black misery which was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and of all the moral tortures which he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, putting down upon the merchant's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel took back the necklace, Mme. Forestier said to her, with a chilly manner:

"You should have returned it sooner, I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Mme. Loisel for a thief?

Mme. Loisel now knew the horrible existence of the needy. She took her part, moreover, all on a sudden, with heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails on the greasy pots and pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts, and the dish-cloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, defending her miserable money sou by sou.

Each month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked in the evening making a fair copy of some tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, every-

thing, with the rates of usury, and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Mme. Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households—strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window, and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so fêted.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How life is strange and changeful! How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or to be saved!

But, one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Élysées to refresh herself from the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Mme. Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Mme. Loisel felt moved. Was she going to speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she was going to tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

"Good day, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good-wife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

"But—madame!—I do not know— You must have mistaken."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"

"Yes, I have had days hard enough, since I have seen you, days wretched enough—and that because of you!"

"Of me! How so?"

"Do you remember that diamond necklace which you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another just like it. And for this we have been ten years paying. You can understand that it was not easy for us, us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am very glad."

Mme. Forestier had stopped.

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"

"Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like."

And she smiled with a joy which was proud and naïve at once.

Mme. Forestier, strongly moved, took her two hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!"

The Man with the Pale Eyes

Monsieur Pierre Agénor de Vargnes, the Examining Magistrate, was the exact opposite of a practical joker. He was dignity, staidness, correctness personified. As a sedate man, he was quite incapable of being guilty, even in his dreams, of anything resembling a practical joke, however remotely. I know nobody to whom he could be compared, unless it be the present president of the French Republic. I think it is useless to carry the analogy any further, and having said thus much, it will be easily understood that a cold shiver passed through me when Monsieur Pierre Agénor de Vargnes did me the honor of sending a lady to await on me.

At about eight o'clock, one morning last winter, as he was leaving the house to go to the *Palais de Justice,* his footman handed him a card, on which was printed:

DOCTOR JAMES FERDINAND,
Member of the Academy of Medicine,
Port-au-Prince,
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

At the bottom of the card there was written in pencil: *From Lady Frogère.*

Monsieur de Vargnes knew the lady very well, who was a very agreeable Creole from Hayti, and whom he had met in many drawing-rooms, and, on the other hand, though the doctor's name did not awaken any recollections in him, his quality and titles alone required that he should grant him an interview, however short it might be. Therefore, although he was in a hurry to get out, Monsieur de Vargnes told the footman to show in his early visitor, but to tell him beforehand that his master was much pressed for time, as he had to go to the Law Courts.

When the doctor came in, in spite of his usual imperturbability, he could not restrain a movement of surprise, for the doctor presented that strange anomaly of being a negro of the purest, blackest type, with the eyes of a white man, of a man from the North, pale, cold, clear, blue eyes, and his surprise increased, when, after a few words of excuse for his untimely visit, he added, with an enigmatical smile:

"My eyes surprise you, do they not? I was sure that they would, and, to tell you the truth, I came here in order that you might look at them well, and never forget them."

His smile, and his words, even more than his smile, seemed to be those of a madman. He spoke very softly, with that childish, lisping voice, which is peculiar to negroes, and his mysterious, almost menacing words, consequently, sounded all the more as if they were uttered at random by a man bereft of his reason. But his looks, the looks of those pale, cold, clear, blue eyes, were certainly not those of a madman. They clearly expressed menace,

yes, menace, as well as irony, and, above all, implacable ferocity, and their glance was like a flash of lightning, which one could never forget.

"I have seen," Monsieur de Vargnes used to say, when speaking about it, "the looks of many murderers, but in none of them have I ever observed such a depth of crime, and of impudent security in crime."

And this impression was so strong, that Monsieur de Vargnes thought that he was the sport of some hallucination, especially as when he spoke about his eyes, the doctor continued with a smile, and in his most childish accents: "Of course, Monsieur, you cannot understand what I am saying to you, and I must beg your pardon for it. To-morrow you will receive a letter which will explain it all to you, but, first of all, it was necessary that I should let you have a good, a careful look at my eyes, my eyes, which are myself, my only and true self, as you will see."

With these words, and with a polite bow, the doctor went out, leaving Monsieur de Vargnes extremely surprised, and a prey to this doubt, as he said to himself:

"Is he merely a madman? The fierce expression, and the criminal depths of his looks are perhaps caused merely by the extraordinary contrast between his fierce looks and his pale eyes."

And absorbed in these thoughts, Monsieur de Vargnes unfortunately allowed several minutes to elapse, and then he thought to himself suddenly:

"No, I am not the sport of any hallucination, and this is no case of an optical phenomenon. This man is evidently some terrible criminal, and I have altogether failed in my duty in not arresting him myself at once, illegally, even at the risk of my life."

The judge ran downstairs in pursuit of the doctor, but it was too late; he had disappeared. In the afternoon, he called on Madame Frogère, to ask her whether she could tell him anything about the matter. She, however, did not know the negro doctor in the least, and was even able to assure him that he was a fictitious personage, for, as she

was well acquainted with the upper classes in Hayti, she knew that the Academy of Medicine at Port-au-Prince had no doctor of that name among its members. As Monsieur de Vargnes persisted, and gave descriptions of the doctor, especially mentioning his extraordinary eyes, Madame Frogère began to laugh, and said:

"You have certainly had to do with a hoaxer, my dear monsieur. The eyes which you have described are certainly those of a white man, and the individual must have been painted."

On thinking it over, Monsieur de Vargnes remembered that the doctor had nothing of the negro about him, but his black skin, his woolly hair and beard, and his way of speaking, which was easily imitated, but nothing of the negro, not even the characteristic, undulating walk. Perhaps, after all, he was only a practical joker, and during the whole day, Monsieur de Vargnes took refuge in that view, which rather wounded his dignity as a man of consequence, but which appeased his scruples as a magistrate.

The next day, he received the promised letter, which was written, as well as addressed, in letters cut out of the newspapers. It was as follows:

"MONSIEUR: Doctor James Ferdinand does not exist, but the man whose eyes you saw does, and you will certainly recognize his eyes. This man has committed two crimes, for which he does not feel any remorse, but, as he is a psychologist, he is afraid of some day yielding to the irresistible temptation of confessing his crimes. You know better than anyone (and that is your most powerful aid), with what imperious force criminals, especially intellectual ones, feel this temptation. That great Poet, Edgar Poe, has written masterpieces on this subject, which express the truth exactly, but he has omitted to mention the last phenomenon, which I will tell you. Yes, I, a criminal, feel a terrible wish for somebody to know of my crimes, and when this requirement is satisfied, my secret has been revealed to a confidant, I shall be tranquil for

the future, and be freed from this demon of perversity, which only tempts us once. Well! Now that is accomplished. You shall have my secret; from the day that you recognize me by my eyes, you will try and find out what I am guilty of, and how I was guilty, and you will discover it, being a master of your profession, which, by the by, has procured you the honor of having been chosen by me to bear the weight of this secret, which now is shared by us, and by us two alone. I say, advisedly, *by us two alone*. You could not, as a matter of fact, prove the reality of this secret to anyone, unless I were to confess it, and I defy you to obtain my public confession, as I have confessed it to you, *and without danger to myself*."

Three months later, Monsieur de Vargnes met Monsieur X—— at an evening party, and at first sight, and without the slightest hesitation, he recognized in him those very pale, very cold, and very clear blue eyes, eyes which it was impossible to forget.

The man himself remained perfectly impassive, so that Monsieur de Vargnes was forced to say to himself:

"Probably I am the sport of an hallucination at this moment, or else there are two pairs of eyes that are perfectly similar in the world. And what eyes! Can it be possible?"

The magistrate instituted inquiries into his life, and he discovered this, which removed all his doubts.

Five years previously, Monsieur X—— had been a very poor, but very brilliant medical student, who, although he never took his doctor's degree, had already made himself remarkable by his microbiological researches.

A young and very rich widow had fallen in love with him and married him. She had one child by her first marriage, and in the space of six months, first the child and then the mother died of typhoid fever, and thus Monsieur X—— had inherited a large fortune, in due form, and without any possible dispute. Everybody said that he had attended to the two patients with the utmost de-

votion. Now, were these two deaths the two crimes mentioned in his letter?

But then, Monsieur X—— must have poisoned his two victims with the microbes of typhoid fever, which he had skillfully cultivated in them, so as to make the disease incurable, even by the most devoted care and attention. Why not?

"Do you believe it?" I asked Monsieur de Vargnes.

"Absolutely," he replied. "And the most terrible thing about it is, that the villain is right when he defies me to force him to confess his crime publicly, for I see no means of obtaining a confession, none whatever. For a moment, I thought of magnetism, but who could magnetize that man with those pale, cold, bright eyes? With such eyes, he would force the magnetizer to denounce himself as the culprit."

And then he said, with a deep sigh:

"Ah! Formerly there was something good about justice!"

And when he saw my inquiring looks, he added in a firm and perfectly convinced voice:

"Formerly, justice had torture at its command."

"Upon my word," I replied, with all an author's unconscious and simple egotism, "it is quite certain that without the torture, this strange tale will have no conclusion, and that is very unfortunate, as far as regards the story I intended to make out of it."

An Uncomfortable Bed

One autumn I went to stay for the hunting season with some friends in a chateau in Picardy.

My friends were fond of practical joking, as all my friends are. I do not care to know any other sort of people.

When I arrived, they gave me a princely reception,

which at once aroused distrust in my breast. We had some capital shooting. They embraced me, they cajoled me, as if they expected to have great fun at my expense.

I said to myself:

"Look out, old ferret! They have something in preparation for you."

During the dinner, the mirth was excessive, far too great, in fact. I thought: "Here are people who take a double share of amusement, and apparently without reason. They must be looking out in their own minds for some good bit of fun. Assuredly I am to be the victim of the joke. Attention!"

During the entire evening, everyone laughed in an exaggerated fashion. I smelled a practical joke in the air, as a dog smells game. But what was it? I was watchful, restless. I did not let a word or a meaning or a gesture escape me. Everyone seemed to me an object of suspicion, and I even looked distrustfully at the faces of the servants.

The hour rang for going to bed, and the whole household came to escort me to my room. Why? They called to me: "Good night." I entered the apartment, shut the door, and remained standing, without moving a single step, holding the wax candle in my hand.

I heard laughter and whispering in the corridor. Without doubt they were spying on me. I cast a glance around the walls, the furniture, the ceiling, the hangings, the floor. I saw nothing to justify suspicion. I heard persons moving about outside my door. I had no doubt they were looking through the keyhole.

An idea came into my head: "My candle may suddenly go out, and leave me in darkness."

Then I went across to the mantelpiece, and lighted all the wax candles that were on it. After that, I cast another glance around me without discovering anything. I advanced with short steps, carefully examining the apartment. Nothing. I inspected every article one after the other. Still nothing. I went over to the window. The shutters,

large wooden shutters, were open. I shut them with great care, and then drew the curtains, enormous velvet curtains, and I placed a chair in front of them, so as to have nothing to fear from without.

Then I cautiously sat down. The armchair was solid. I did not venture to get into the bed. However, time was flying; and I ended by coming to the conclusion that I was ridiculous. If they were spying on me, as I supposed, they must, while waiting for the success of the joke they had been preparing for me, have been laughing enormously at my terror. So I made up my mind to go to bed. But the bed was particularly suspicious-looking. I pulled at the curtains. They seemed to be secure. All the same, there was danger. I was going perhaps to receive a cold shower-bath from overhead, or perhaps, the moment I stretched myself out, to find myself sinking under the floor with my mattress. I searched in my memory for all the practical jokes of which I ever had experience. And I did not want to be caught. Ah! certainly not! certainly not! Then I suddenly bethought myself of a precaution which I consider one of extreme efficacy: I caught hold of the side of the mattress gingerly, and very slowly drew it toward me. It came away, followed by the sheet and the rest of the bedclothes. I dragged all these objects into the very middle of the room, facing the entrance door. I made my bed over again as best I could at some distance from the suspected bedstead and the corner which had filled me with such anxiety. Then, I extinguished all the candles, and, groping my way, I slipped under the bedclothes.

For at least another hour, I remained awake, starting at the slightest sound. Everything seemed quiet in the chateau. I fell asleep.

I must have been in a deep sleep for a long time, but all of a sudden, I was awakened with a start by the fall of a heavy body tumbling right on top of my own body, and, at the same time, I received on my face, on my neck, and on my chest a burning liquid which made me utter

a howl of pain. And a dreadful noise, as if a sideboard laden with plates and dishes had fallen down, penetrated my ears.

I felt myself suffocating under the weight that was crushing me and preventing me from moving. I stretched out my hand to find out what was the nature of this object. I felt a face, a nose, and whiskers. Then with all my strength I launched out a blow over this face. But I immediately received a hail of cuffings which made me jump straight out of the soaked sheets, and rush in my nightshirt into the corridor, the door of which I found open.

O stupor! it was broad daylight. The noise brought my friends hurrying into the apartment, and we found, sprawling over my improvised bed, the dismayed valet, who, while bringing me my morning cup of tea, had tripped over this obstacle in the middle of the floor, and fallen on his stomach, spilling, in spite of himself, my breakfast over my face.

The precautions I had taken in closing the shutters and going to sleep in the middle of the room had only brought about the interlude I had been striving to avoid.

Ah! how they all laughed that day!

Ghosts

Just at the time when the *Concordat* was in its most flourishing condition, a young man belonging to a wealthy and highly respected middle-class family went to the office of the head of the police at P——, and begged for his help and advice, which was immediately promised him.

"My father threatens to disinherit me," the young man then began, "although I have never offended against the laws of the State, of morality or of his paternal authority, merely because I do not share his blind reverence for the Catholic Church and her Ministers. On that account he

looks upon me, not merely as Latitudinarian, but as a perfect Atheist, and a faithful old manservant of ours, who is much attached to me, and who accidentally saw my father's will, told me in confidence that he had left all his property to the Jesuits. I think this is highly suspicious, and I fear that the priests have been maligning me to my father. Until less than a year ago, we used to live very quietly and happily together, but ever since he has had so much to do with the clergy, our domestic peace and happiness are at an end."

"What you have told me," the official replied, "is as likely as it is regrettable, but I fail to see how I can interfere in the matter. Your father is in full possession of all his mental faculties, and can dispose of all his property exactly as he pleases. I also think that your protest is premature; you must wait until his will can legally take effect, and then you can invoke the aid of justice; I am sorry to say that I can do nothing for you."

"I think you will be able to," the young man replied; "for I believe that a very clever piece of deceit is being carried on here."

"How? Please explain yourself more clearly."

"When I remonstrated with him, yesterday evening, he referred to my dead mother, and at last assured me, in a voice of the deepest conviction, that she had frequently appeared to him, and had threatened him with all the torments of the damned if he did not disinherit his son, who had fallen away from God, and leave all his property to the Church. Now I do not believe in ghosts."

"Neither do I," the police director replied; "but I cannot well do anything on this dangerous ground if I had nothing but superstitions to go upon. You know how the Church rules all our affairs since the *Concordat* with Rome, and if I investigate this matter, and obtain no results, I am risking my post. It would be very different if you could adduce any proofs for your suspicions. I do not deny that I should like to see the clerical party, which will, I fear, be the ruin of Austria, receive a staggering blow; try, therefore, to

get to the bottom of this business, and then we will talk it over again."

About a month passed without the young Latitudinarian being heard of; but then he suddenly came one evening, evidently in a great state of excitement, and told him that he was in a position to expose the priestly deceit which he had mentioned, if the authorities would assist him. The police director asked for further information.

"I have obtained a number of important clews," the young man said. "In the first place, my father confessed to me that my mother did not appear to him in our house, but in the churchyard where she is buried. My mother was consumptive for many years, and a few weeks before her death she went to the village of S——, where she died and was buried. In addition to this, I found out from our footman that my father has already left the house twice, late at night, in company of X——, the Jesuit priest, and that on both occasions he did not return till morning. Each time he was remarkably uneasy and low-spirited after his return, and had three masses said for my dead mother. He also told me just now that he has to leave home this evening on business, but immediately he told me that, our footman saw the Jesuit go out of the house. We may, therefore, assume that he intends this evening to consult the spirit of my dead mother again, and this would be an excellent opportunity for getting on the track of the matter, if you do not object to opposing the most powerful force in the Empire, for the sake of such an insignificant individual as myself."

"Every citizen has an equal right to the protection of the State," the police director replied; "and I think that I have shown often enough that I am not wanting in courage to perform my duty, no matter how serious the consequences may be; but only very young men act without any prospects of success, as they are carried away by their feelings. When you came to me the first time, I was obliged to refuse your request for assistance, but to-day your shares have risen in value. It is now eight o'clock, and I shall

expect you in two hours' time here in my office. At present, all you have to do is to hold your tongue; everything else is my affair."

As soon as it was dark, four men got into a closed carriage in the yard of the police office, and were driven in the direction of the village of S——; their carriage, however, did not enter the village, but stopped at the edge of a small wood in the immediate neighborhood. Here they all four alighted; they were the police director, accompanied by the young Latitudinarian, a police sergeant and an ordinary policeman, who was, however, dressed in plain clothes.

"The first thing for us to do is to examine the locality carefully," the police director said: "it is eleven o'clock and the exorcisers of ghosts will not arrive before midnight, so we have time to look round us, and to take our measure."

The four men went to the churchyard, which lay at the end of the village, near the little wood. Everything was as still as death, and not a soul was to be seen. The sexton was evidently sitting in the public house, for they found the door of his cottage locked, as well as the door of the little chapel that stood in the middle of the churchyard.

"Where is your mother's grave?" the police director asked; but as there were only a few stars visible, it was not easy to find it, but at last they managed it, and the police director looked about in the neighborhood of it.

"The position is not a very favorable one for us," he said at last; "there is nothing here, not even a shrub, behind which we could hide."

But just then, the policeman said that he had tried to get into the sexton's hut through the door or the window, and that at last he had succeeded in doing so by breaking open a square in a window, which had been mended with paper, and that he had opened it and obtained posesssion of the key which he brought to the police director.

His plans were very quickly settled. He had the chapel opened and went in with the young Latitudinarian; then

he told the police sergeant to lock the door behind him and to put the key back where he had found it, and to shut the window of the sexton's cottage carefully. Lastly, he made arrangements as to what they were to do in case anything unforeseen should occur, whereupon the sergeant and the constable left the churchyard, and lay down in a ditch at some distance from the gate, but opposite to it.

Almost as soon as the clock struck half-past eleven, they heard steps near the chapel, whereupon the police director and the young Latitudinarian went to the window, in order to watch the beginning of the exorcism, and as the chapel was in total darkness, they thought that they should be able to see, without being seen; but matters turned out differently from what they expected.

Suddenly, the key turned in the lock, and they barely had time to conceal themselves behind the altar before two men came in, one of whom was carrying a dark lantern. One was the young man's father, an elderly man of the middle class, who seemed very unhappy and depressed, the other the Jesuit father K——, a tall, thin, big-boned man, with a thin, bilious face, in which two large gray eyes shone restlessly under their bushy black eyebrows. He lit the tapers, which were standing on the altar, and then began to say a *Requiem Mass*; while the old man knelt on the altar steps and served him.

When it was over, the Jesuit took the book of the Gospels and the holy-water sprinkler, and went slowly out of the chapel, while the old man followed him, with a holy-water basin in one hand and a taper in the other. Then the police director left his hiding place, and stooping down, so as not to be seen, he crept to the chapel window, where he cowered down carefully, and the young man followed his example. They were now looking straight on his mother's grave.

The Jesuit, followed by the superstitious old man, walked three times round the grave, then he remained standing before it, and by the light of the taper he read a few passages from the Gospel; then he dipped the holy-

water sprinkler three times into the holy-water basin, and sprinkled the grave three times; then both returned to the chapel, knelt down outside it with their faces toward the grave, and began to pray aloud, until at last the Jesuit sprang up, in a species of wild ecstasy, and cried out three times in a shrill voice:

"*Exsurge! Exsurge! Exsurge!*" [1]

Scarcely had the last word of the exorcism died away when thick, blue smoke rose out of the grave, which rapidly grew into a cloud, and began to assume the outlines of a human body, until at last a tall, white figure stood behind the grave, and beckoned with its hand.

"Who art thou?" the Jesuit asked solemnly, while the old man began to cry.

"When I was alive, I was called Anna Maria B——," the ghost replied in a hollow voice.

"Will you answer all my questions?" the priest continued.

"As far as I can."

"Have you not yet been delivered from purgatory by our prayers, and all the Masses for your soul, which we have said for you?"

"Not yet, but soon, soon I shall be."

"When?"

"As soon as that blasphemer, my son, has been punished."

"Has that not already happened? Has not your husband disinherited his lost son, and made the Church his heir, in his place?"

"That is not enough."

"What must he do besides?"

"He must deposit his will with the Judicial Authorities as his last will and testament, and drive the reprobate out of his house."

"Consider well what you are saying; must this really be?"

"It must, or otherwise I shall have to languish in purga-

[1] Arise!

tory much longer," the sepulchral voice replied with a deep sigh; but the next moment it yelled out in terror:—

"Oh! Good Lord!" and the ghost began to run away as fast as it could. A shrill whistle was heard, and then another, and the police director laid his hand on the shoulder of the exorciser accompanied with the remark:—

"You are in custody."

Meanwhile, the police sergeant and the policeman, who had come into the churchyard, had caught the ghost, and dragged it forward. It was the sexton, who had put on a flowing, white dress, and who wore a wax mask, which bore striking resemblance to his mother, as the son declared.

When the case was heard, it was proved that the mask had been very skillfully made from a portrait of the deceased woman. The Government gave orders that the matter should be investigated as secretly as possible, and left the punishment of Father K—— to the spiritual authorities, which was a matter of course, at a time when priests were outside the jurisdiction of the Civil Authorities; and it is needless to say that he was very comfortable during his imprisonment, in a monastery in a part of the country which abounded with game and trout.

The only valuable result of the amusing ghost story was that it brought about a reconciliation between father and son, and the former, as a matter of fact, felt such deep respect for priests and their ghosts in consequence of the apparition that a short time after his wife had left purgatory for the last time in order to talk with him — he turned *Protestant.*

Fear

We went up on deck after dinner. Before us the Mediterranean lay without a ripple and shimmering in the moonlight. The great ship glided on, casting upward to the star-studded sky a long serpent of black smoke.

Behind us the dazzling white water, stirred by the rapid progress of the heavy bark and beaten by the propeller, foamed, seemed to writhe, gave off so much brilliancy that one could have called it boiling moonlight.

There were six or eight of us silent with admiration and gazing toward far-away Africa whither we were going. The commandant, who was smoking a cigar with us, brusquely resumed the conversation begun at dinner.

"Yes, I was afraid then. My ship remained for six hours on that rock, beaten by the wind and with a great hole in the side. Luckily we were picked up toward evening by an English coaler which sighted us."

Then a tall man of sunburned face and grave demeanor, one of those men who have evidently traveled unknown and far-away lands, whose calm eye seems to preserve in its depths something of the foreign scenes it has observed, a man that you are sure is impregnated with courage, spoke for the first time.

"You say, commandant, that you were afraid. I beg to disagree with you. You are in error as to the meaning of the word and the nature of the sensation that you experienced. An energetic man is never afraid in the presence of urgent danger. He is excited, aroused, full of anxiety, but fear is something quite different."

The commandant laughed and answered: "Bah! I assure you that I was afraid."

Then the man of the tanned countenance addressed us deliberately as follows:

"Permit me to explain. Fear—and the boldest men may feel fear—is something horrible, an atrocious sensation, a sort of decomposition of the soul, a terrible spasm of brain and heart, the very memory of which brings a shudder of anguish, but when one is brave he feels it neither under fire nor in the presence of sure death nor in the face of any well-known danger. It springs up under certain abnormal conditions, under certain mysterious influences in the presence of vague peril. Real fear is a sort of reminiscence of fantastic terror of the past. A man who believes

in ghosts and imagines he sees a specter in the darkness must feel fear in all its horror.

"As for me I was overwhelmed with fear in broad daylight about ten years ago and again one December night last winter.

"Nevertheless, I have gone through many dangers, many adventures which seemed to promise death. I have often been in battle. I have been left for dead by thieves. In America I was condemned as an insurgent to be hanged, and off the coast of China have been thrown into the sea from the deck of a ship. Each time I thought I was lost I at once decided upon my course of action without regret or weakness.

"That is not fear.

"I have felt it in Africa, and yet it is a child of the north. The sunlight banishes it like the mist. Consider this fact, gentlemen. Among the Orientals life has no value; resignation is natural. The nights are clear and empty of the somber spirit of unrest which haunts the brain in cooler lands. In the Orient panic is known, but not fear.

"Well, then! Here is the incident that befell me in Africa.

"I was crossing the great sands to the south of Onargla. It is one of the most curious districts in the world. You have seen the solid continuous sand of the endless ocean strands. Well, imagine the ocean itself turned to sand in the midst of a storm. Imagine a silent tempest with motionless billows of yellow dust. They are high as mountains, these uneven, varied surges, rising exactly like unchained billows, but still larger, and stratified like watered silk. On this wild, silent, and motionless sea, the consuming rays of the tropical sun are poured pitilessly and directly. You have to climb these streaks of red-hot ash, descend again on the other side, climb again, climb, climb without halt, without repose, without shade. The horses cough, sink to their knees and slide down the sides of these remarkable hills.

"We were a couple of friends followed by eight spahis and four camels with their drivers. We were no longer talking, overcome by heat, fatigue, and a thirst such as had produced this burning desert. Suddenly one of our men uttered a cry. We all halted, surprised by an unsolved phenomenon known only to travelers in these trackless wastes.

"Somewhere, near us, in an indeterminable direction, a drum was rolling, the mysterious drum of the sands. It was beating distinctly, now with greater resonance and again feebler, ceasing, then resuming its uncanny roll.

"The Arabs, terrified, stared at one another, and one said in his language: 'Death is upon us.' As he spoke, my companion, my friend, almost a brother, dropped from his horse, falling face downward on the sand, overcome by a sunstroke.

"And for two hours, while I tried in vain to save him, this weird drum filled my ears with its monotonous, intermittent and incomprehensible tone, and I felt lay hold of my bones fear, real fear, hideous fear, in the presence of this beloved corpse, in this hole scorched by the sun, surrounded by four mountains of sand, and two hundred leagues from any French settlement, while echo assailed our ears with this furious drum beat.

"On that day I realized what fear was, but since then I have had another, and still more vivid experience——"

The commandant interrupted the speaker:

"I beg your pardon, but what was the drum?"

The traveler replied:

"I cannot say. No one knows. Our officers are often surprised by this singular noise and attribute it generally to the echo produced by a hail of grains of sand blown by the wind against the dry and brittle leaves of weeds, for it has always been noticed that the phenomenon occurs in proximity to little plants burned by the sun and hard as parchment. This sound seems to have been magnified, multiplied, and swelled beyond measure in its progress through the valleys of sand, and the drum there-

fore might be considered a sort of sound mirage. Nothing more. But I did not know that until later.

"I shall proceed to my second instance.

"It was last winter, in a forest of the Northeast of France. The sky was so overcast that night came two hours earlier than usual. My guide was a peasant who walked beside me along the narrow road, under the vault of fir trees, through which the wind in its fury howled. Between the tree tops, I saw the fleeting clouds, which seemed to hasten as if to escape some object of terror. Sometimes in a fierce gust of wind the whole forest bowed in the same direction with a groan of pain, and a chill laid hold of me, despite my rapid pace and heavy clothing.

"We were to sup and sleep at an old gamekeeper's house not much farther on. I had come out for hunting.

"My guide sometimes raised his eyes and murmured: 'Ugly weather!' Then he told me about the people among whom we were to spend the night. The father had killed a poacher, two years before, and since then had been gloomy and behaved as though haunted by a memory. His two sons were married and lived with him.

"The darkness was profound. I could see nothing before me nor around me and the mass of overhanging interlacing trees rubbed together, filling the night with an incessant whispering. Finally I saw a light and soon my companion was knocking upon a door. Sharp women's voices answered us, then a man's voice, a choking voice, asked, 'Who goes there?' My guide gave his name. We entered and beheld a memorable picture.

"An old man with white hair, wild eyes, and a loaded gun in his hands, stood waiting for us in the middle of the kitchen, while two stalwart youths, armed with axes, guarded the door. In the somber corners I distinguished two women kneeling with faces to the wall.

"Matters were explained, and the old man stood his gun against the wall, at the same time ordering that a room be prepared for me. Then, as the women did not

stir: 'Look you, monsieur,' said he, 'two years ago this night I killed a man, and last year he came back to haunt me. I expect him again to-night.'

"Then he added in a tone that made me smile:

"'And so we are somewhat excited.'

"I reassured him as best I could, happy to have arrived on that particular evening and to witness this superstitious terror. I told stories and almost succeeded in calming the whole household.

"Near the fireplace slept an old dog, mustached and almost blind, with his head between his paws, such a dog as reminds you of people you have known.

"Outside, the raging storm was beating against the little house, and suddenly through a small pane of glass, a sort of peep-window placed near the door, I saw in a brilliant flash of lightning a whole mass of trees thrashed by the wind.

"In spite of my efforts, I realized that terror was laying hold of these people, and each time that I ceased to speak, all ears listened for distant sounds. Annoyed at these foolish fears, I was about to retire to my bed, when the old gamekeeper suddenly leaped from his chair, seized his gun and stammered wildly: 'There he is, there he is! I hear him!' The two women again sank upon their knees in the corner and hid their faces, while the sons took up the axes. I was going to try to pacify them once more, when the sleeping dog awakened suddenly and, raising his head and stretching his neck, looked at the fire with his dim eyes and uttered one of those mournful howls which make travelers shudder in the darkness and solitude of the country. All eyes were focused upon him now as he rose on his front feet, as though haunted by a vision, and began to howl at something invisible, unknown, and doubtless horrible, for he was bristling all over. The gamekeeper with livid face cried: 'He scents him! He scents him! He was there when I killed him.' The two women, terrified, began to wail in concert with the dog.

"In spite of myself, cold chills ran down my spine. This

vision of the animal at such a time and place, in the midst of these startled people, was something frightful to witness.

"Then for an hour the dog howled without stirring; he howled as though in the anguish of a nightmare; and fear, horrible fear came over me. Fear of what? How can I say? It was fear, and that is all I know.

"We remained motionless and pale, expecting something awful to happen. Our ears were strained and our hearts beat loudly while the slightest noise startled us. Then the beast began to walk around the room, sniffing at the walls and growling constantly. His maneuvers were driving us mad! Then the countryman, who had brought me thither, in a paroxysm of rage, seized the dog, and carrying him to a door, which opened into a small court, thrust him forth.

"The noise was suppressed and we were left plunged in a silence still more terrible. Then suddenly we all started. Some one was gliding along the outside wall toward the forest; then he seemed to be feeling of the door with a trembling hand; then for two minutes nothing was heard and we almost lost our minds. Then he returned, still feeling along the wall, and scratched lightly upon the door as a child might do with his finger nails. Suddenly a face appeared behind the glass of the peep-window, a white face with eyes shining like those of the cat tribe. A sound was heard, an indistinct plaintive murmur.

"Then there was a formidable burst of noise in the kitchen. The old gamekeeper had fired and the two sons at once rushed forward and barricaded the window with the great table, reinforcing it with the buffet.

"I swear to you that at the shock of the gun's discharge, which I did not expect, such an anguish laid hold of my heart, my soul, and my very body that I felt myself about to fall, about to die from fear.

"We remained there until dawn, unable to move, in short, seized by an indescribable numbness of the brain.

"No one dared to remove the barricade until a thin ray of sunlight appeared through a crack in the back room.

"At the base of the wall and under the window, we found the old dog lying dead, his skull shattered by a ball.

"He had escaped from the little court by digging a hole under a fence."

The dark-visaged man became silent, then he added:

"And yet on that night I incurred no danger, but I should rather again pass through all the hours in which I have confronted the most terrible perils than the one minute when that gun was discharged at the bearded head in the window."

The Confession

MARGUÉRITE DE THÉRELLES was dying. Although but fifty-six, she seemed like seventy-five at least. She panted, paler than the sheets, shaken by dreadful shiverings, her face convulsed, her eyes haggard, as if she had seen some horrible thing.

Her eldest sister, Suzanne, six years older, sobbed on her knees beside the bed. A little table drawn close to the couch of the dying woman, and covered with a napkin, bore two lighted candles, the priest being momentarily expected to give extreme unction and the communion, which should be the last.

The apartment had that sinister aspect, that air of hopeless farewells, which belongs to the chambers of the dying. Medicine bottles stood about on the furniture, linen lay in the corners, pushed aside by foot or broom. The disordered chairs themselves seemed affrighted, as if they had run, in all the senses of the word. Death, the formidable, was there, hidden, waiting.

The story of the two sisters was very touching. It was quoted far and wide; it had made many eyes to weep.

Suzanne, the elder, had once been madly in love with a young man, who had also been in love with her. They were engaged, and were only waiting the day fixed for the contract, when Henry de Lampierre suddenly died.

The despair of the young girl was dreadful, and she vowed that she would never marry. She kept her word. She put on widow's weeds, which she never took off.

Then her sister, her little sister Marguérite, who was only twelve years old, came one morning to throw herself into the arms of the elder, and said: "Big Sister, I do not want thee to be unhappy. I do not want thee to cry all thy life. I will never leave thee, never, never! I—I, too, shall never marry. I shall stay with thee always, always, always!"

Suzanne, touched by the devotion of the child, kissed her, but did not believe.

Yet the little one, also, kept her word, and despite the entreaties of her parents, despite the supplications of the elder, she never married. She was pretty, very pretty; she refused many a young man who seemed to love her truly; and she never left her sister more.

They lived together all the days of their life, without ever being separated a single time. They went side by side, inseparably united. But Marguérite seemed always sad, oppressed, more melancholy than the elder, as though perhaps her sublime sacrifice had broken her spirit. She aged more quickly, had white hair from the age of thirty, and often suffering, seemed afflicted by some secret, gnawing trouble.

Now she was to be the first to die.

Since yesterday she was no longer able to speak. She had only said, at the first glimmers of day-dawn:

"Go fetch Monsieur le Curé, the moment has come."

And she had remained since then upon her back, shaken with spasms, her lips agitated as though dreadful words were mounting from her heart without power of issue, her look mad with fear, terrible to see.

Her sister, torn by sorrow, wept wildly, her forehead resting on the edge of the bed, and kept repeating:

"Margot, my poor Margot, my little one!"

She had always called her, "Little One," just as the younger had always called her "Big Sister."

Steps were heard on the stairs. The door opened. A choir boy appeared, followed by an old priest in a surplice. As soon as she perceived him, the dying woman, with one shudder, sat up, opened her lips, stammered two or three words, and began to scratch the sheets with her nails as if she had wished to make a hole.

The Abbé Simon approached, took her hand, kissed her brow, and with a soft voice:

"God pardon thee, my child; have courage, the moment is now come, speak."

Then Marguérite, shivering from head to foot, shaking her whole couch with nervous movements, stammered:

"Sit down, Big Sister . . . listen."

The priest bent down toward Suzanne, who was still flung upon the bed's foot. He raised her, placed her in an armchair, and taking a hand of each of the sisters in one of his own, he pronounced:

"Lord, my God! Endue them with strength, cast Thy mercy upon them."

And Marguérite began to speak. The words issued from her throat one by one, raucous, with sharp pauses, as though very feeble.

"Pardon, pardon, Big Sister; oh, forgive! If thou knewest how I have had fear of this moment all my life . . ."

Suzanne stammered through her tears:

"Forgive thee what, Little One? Thou hast given all to me, sacrificed everything; thou art an angel . . ."

But Marguérite interrupted her:

"Hush, hush! Let me speak . . . do not stop me. It is dreadful . . . let me tell all . . . to the very end, without flinching. Listen. Thou rememberest . . . thou rememberest . . . Henry . . ."

Suzanne trembled and looked at her sister. The younger continued:

"Thou must hear all, to understand. I was twelve years old, only twelve years old; thou rememberest well, is it not so? And I was spoiled, I did everything that I liked! Thou rememberest, surely, how they spoiled me? Listen. The first time that he came he had varnished boots. He got down from his horse at the great steps, and he begged pardon for his costume, but he came to bring some news to papa. Thou rememberest, is it not so? Don't speak—listen. When I saw him I was completely carried away, I found him so very beautiful; and I remained standing in a corner of the *salon* all the time that he was talking. Children are strange . . . and terrible. Oh yes . . . I have dreamed of all that.

"He came back again . . . several times . . . I looked at him with all my eyes, with all my soul . . . I was large of my age . . . and very much more knowing than anyone thought. He came back often . . . I thought only of him. I said, very low:

"'Henry . . . Henry de Lampierre!'

"Then they said that he was going to marry thee. It was a sorrow; oh, Big Sister, a sorrow . . . a sorrow! I cried for three nights without sleeping. He came back every day, in the afternoon, after his lunch . . . thou rememberest, is it not so? Say nothing . . . listen. Thou madest him cakes which he liked . . . with meal, with butter and milk, Oh, I know well how. I could make them yet if it were needed. He ate them at one mouthful, and . . . and then he drank a glass of wine, and then he said, 'It is delicious.' Thou rememberest how he would say that?

"I was jealous, jealous! The moment of thy marriage approached. There were only two weeks more. I became crazy. I said to myself: 'He shall not marry Suzanne, no, I will not have it! It is I whom he will marry when I am grown up. I shall never find anyone whom I love so much.' But one night, ten days before the contract, thou tookest a walk with him in front of the chateau by moonlight . . . and there . . . under the fir, under the great

fir . . . he kissed thee . . . kissed . . . holding thee in his two arms . . . so long. Thou rememberest, is it not so? It was probably the first time . . . yes . . . Thou wast so pale when thou camest back to the *salon.*

" I had seen you two; I was there, in the shrubbery. I was angry! If I could I should have killed you both!

" I said to myself: ' He shall not marry Suzanne, never! He shall marry no one. I should be too unhappy.' And all of a sudden I began to hate him dreadfully.

" Then, dost thou know what I did? Listen. I had seen the gardener making little balls to kill strange dogs. He pounded up a bottle with a stone and put the powdered glass in a little ball of meat.

" I took a little medicine bottle that mamma had; I broke it small with a hammer, and I hid the glass in my pocket. It was a shining powder . . . The next day, as soon as you had made the little cakes . . . I split them with a knife and I put in the glass . . . He ate three of them . . . I too, I ate one . . . I threw the other six into the pond. The two swans died three days after . . . Dost thou remember? Oh, say nothing . . . listen, listen. I, I alone did not die . . . but I have always been sick. Listen . . . He died—thou knowest well . . . listen . . . that, that is nothing. It is afterwards, later . . . always . . . the worst . . . listen.

" My life, all my life . . . what torture! I said to myself: ' I will never leave my sister. And at the hour of death I will tell her all . . .' There! And ever since, I have always thought of that moment when I should tell thee all. Now it is come. It is terrible. Oh . . . Big Sister!

" I have always thought, morning and evening, by night and by day, ' Some time I must tell her that . . .' I waited . . . What agony! . . . It is done. Say nothing. Now I am afraid . . . am afraid . . . oh, I am afraid. If I am going to see him again, soon, when I am dead. See him again . . . think of it! The first! Before thou! I shall not dare. I must . . . I am going to die . . . I want

you to forgive me. I want it . . . I cannot go off to meet him without that. Oh, tell her to forgive me, Monsieur le Curé, tell her . . . I implore you to do it. I cannot die without that . . ."

She was silent, and remained panting, always scratching the sheet with her withered nails.

Suzanne had hidden her face in her hands, and did not move. She was thinking of him whom she might have loved so long! What a good life they should have lived together! She saw him once again in that vanished bygone time, in that old past which was put out forever. The beloved dead—how they tear your hearts! Oh, that kiss, his only kiss! She had hidden it in her soul. And after it nothing, nothing more her whole life long!

All of a sudden the priest stood straight, and, with a strong vibrant voice, he cried:

"Mademoiselle Suzanne, your sister is dying!"

Then Suzanne, opening her hands, showed her face soaked with tears, and throwing herself upon her sister, she kissed her with all her might, stammering:

"I forgive thee, I forgive thee, Little One."

The Horla, or Modern Ghosts

May 8th. What a lovely day! I have spent all the morning lying in the grass in front of my house, under the enormous plantain tree which covers it, and shades and shelters the whole of it. I like this part of the country and I am fond of living here because I am attached to it by deep roots, profound and delicate roots which attach a man to the soil on which his ancestors were born and died, which attach him to what people think and what they eat, to the usages as well as to the food, local expressions, the peculiar language of the peasants, to the

smell of the soil, of the villages and of the atmosphere itself.

I love my house in which I grew up. From my windows I can see the Seine which flows by the side of my garden, on the other side of the road, almost through my grounds, the great and wide Seine, which goes to Rouen and Havre, and which is covered with boats passing to and fro.

On the left, down yonder, lies Rouen, that large town with its blue roofs, under its pointed Gothic towers. They are innumerable, delicate or broad, dominated by the spire of the cathedral, and full of bells which sound through the blue air on fine mornings, sending their sweet and distant iron clang to me; their metallic sound which the breeze wafts in my direction, now stronger and now weaker, according as the wind is stronger or lighter.

What a delicious morning it was!

About eleven o'clock, a long line of boats drawn by a steam tug, as big as a fly, and which scarcely puffed while emitting its thick smoke, passed my gate.

After two English schooners, whose red flag fluttered toward the sky, there came a magnificent Brazilian three-master; it was perfectly white and wonderfully clean and shining. I saluted it, I hardly know why, except that the sight of the vessel gave me great pleasure.

May 12th. I have had a slight feverish attack for the last few days, and I feel ill, or rather I feel low-spirited.

Whence do these mysterious influences come, which change our happiness into discouragement, and our self-confidence into diffidence? One might almost say that the air, the invisible air is full of unknowable Forces, whose mysterious presence we have to endure. I wake up in the best spirits, with an inclination to sing in my throat. Why? I go down by the side of the water, and suddenly, after walking a short distance, I return home wretched, as if some misfortune were awaiting me there. Why? Is it a cold shiver which, passing over my skin, has upset my nerves and given me low spirits? Is it the form of the

clouds, or the color of the sky, or the color of the surrounding objects which is so changeable, which have troubled my thoughts as they passed before my eyes? Who can tell? Everything that surrounds us, everything that we see without looking at it, everything that we touch without knowing it, everything that we handle without feeling it, all that we meet without clearly distinguishing it, has a rapid, surprising and inexplicable effect upon us and upon our organs, and through them on our ideas and on our heart itself.

How profound that mystery of the Invisible is! We cannot fathom it with our miserable senses, with our eyes which are unable to perceive what is either too small or too great, too near to, or too far from us; neither the inhabitants of a star nor of a drop of water . . . with our ears that deceive us, for they transmit to us the vibrations of the air in sonorous notes. They are fairies who work the miracle of changing that movement into noise, and by that metamorphosis give birth to music, which makes the mute agitation of nature musical . . . with our sense of smell which is smaller than that of a dog . . . with our sense of taste which can scarcely distinguish the age of a wine!

Oh! If we only had other organs which would work other miracles in our favor, what a number of fresh things we might discover around us!

May 16th. I am ill, decidedly! I was so well last month! I am feverish, horribly feverish, or rather I am in a state of feverish enervation, which makes my mind suffer as much as my body. I have without ceasing that horrible sensation of some danger threatening me, that apprehension of some coming misfortune or of approaching death, that presentiment which is, no doubt, an attack of some illness which is still unknown, which germinates in the flesh and in the blood.

May 18th. I have just come from consulting my medical man, for I could no longer get any sleep. He found that my pulse was high, my eyes dilated, my nerves highly

strung, but no alarming symptoms. I must have a course of shower-baths and of bromide of potassium.

May 25th. No change! My state is really very peculiar. As the evening comes on, an incomprehensible feeling of disquietude seizes me, just as if night concealed some terrible menace toward me. I dine quickly, and then try to read, but I do not understand the words, and can scarcely distinguish the letters. Then I walk up and down my drawing-room, oppressed by a feeling of confused and irresistible fear, the fear of sleep and fear of my bed.

About ten o'clock I go up to my room. As soon as I have got in I double lock, and bolt it: I am frightened—of what? Up till the present time I have been frightened of nothing—I open my cupboards, and look under my bed; I listen—I listen—to what? How strange it is that a simple feeling of discomfort, impeded or heightened circulation, perhaps the irritation of a nervous thread, a slight congestion, a small disturbance in the imperfect and delicate functions of our living machinery, can turn the most lighthearted of men into a melancholy one, and make a coward of the bravest! Then, I go to bed, and I wait for sleep as a man might wait for the executioner. I wait for its coming with dread, and my heart beats and my legs tremble, while my whole body shivers beneath the warmth of the bedclothes, until the moment when I suddenly fall asleep, as one would throw oneself into a pool of stagnant water in order to drown oneself. I do not feel coming over me, as I used to do formerly, this perfidious sleep which is close to me and watching me, which is going to seize me by the head, to close my eyes and annihilate me.

I sleep—a long time—two or three hours perhaps—then a dream—no—a nightmare lays hold on me. I feel that I am in bed and asleep—I feel it and I know it—and I feel also that somebody is coming close to me, is looking at me, touching me, is getting on to my bed, is kneeling on my chest, is taking my neck between his hands and squeezing it—squeezing it with all his might in order to strangle me.

I struggle, bound by that terrible powerlessness which paralyzes us in our dreams; I try to cry out—but I cannot; I want to move—I cannot; I try, with the most violent efforts and out of breath, to turn over and throw off this being which is crushing and suffocating me—I cannot!

And then, suddenly, I wake up, shaken and bathed in perspiration; I light a candle and find that I am alone, and after that crisis, which occurs every night, I at length fall asleep and slumber tranquilly till morning.

June 2d. My state has grown worse. What is the matter with me? The bromide does me no good, and the shower-baths have no effect whatever. Sometimes, in order to tire myself out, though I am fatigued enough already, I go for a walk in the forest of Roumare. I used to think at first that the fresh light and soft air, impregnated with the odor of herbs and leaves, would instill new blood into my veins and impart fresh energy to my heart. I turned into a broad ride in the wood, and then I turned toward La Bouille, through a narrow path, between two rows of exceedingly tall trees, which placed a thick, green, almost black roof between the sky and me.

A sudden shiver ran through me, not a cold shiver, but a shiver of agony, and so I hastened my steps, uneasy at being alone in the wood, frightened stupidly and without reason, at the profound solitude. Suddenly it seemed to me as if I were being followed, that somebody was walking at my heels, close, quite close to me, near enough to touch me.

I turned round suddenly, but I was alone. I saw nothing behind me except the straight, broad ride, empty and bordered by high trees, horribly empty; on the other side it also extended until it was lost in the distance, and looked just the same, terrible.

I closed my eyes. Why? And then I began to turn round on one heel very quickly, just like a top. I nearly fell down, and opened my eyes; the trees were dancing round me and the earth heaved; I was obliged to sit down. Then, ah! I no longer remembered how I had come! What

a strange idea! What a strange, strange idea! I did not the least know. I started off to the right, and got back into the avenue which had led me into the middle of the forest.

June 3d. I have had a terrible night. I shall go away for a few weeks, for no doubt a journey will set me up again.

July 2d. I have come back, quite cured, and have had a most delightful trip into the bargain. I have been to Mont Saint-Michel, which I had not seen before.

What a sight, when one arrives as I did, at Avranches toward the end of the day! The town stands on a hill, and I was taken into the public garden at the extremity of the town. I uttered a cry of astonishment. An extraordinarily large bay lay extended before me, as far as my eyes could reach, between two hills which were lost to sight in the mist; and in the middle of this immense yellow bay, under a clear, golden sky, a peculiar hill rose up, somber and pointed in the midst of the sand. The sun had just disappeared, and under the still flaming sky the outline of that fantastic rock stood out, which bears on its summit a fantastic monument.

At daybreak I went to it. The tide was low as it had been the night before, and I saw that wonderful abbey rise up before me as I approached it. After several hours' walking, I reached the enormous mass of rocks which supports the little town, dominated by the great church. Having climbed the steep and narrow street, I entered the most wonderful Gothic building that has ever been built to God on earth, as large as a town, full of low rooms which seem buried beneath vaulted roofs, and lofty galleries supported by delicate columns.

I entered this gigantic granite jewel which is as light as a bit of lace, covered with towers, with slender belfries to which spiral staircases ascend, and which raise their strange heads that bristle with chimeras, with devils, with fantastic animals, with monstrous flowers, and which are joined together by finely carved arches, to the blue sky by day, and to the black sky by night.

When I had reached the summit, I said to the monk who accompanied me: "Father, how happy you must be here!" And he replied: "It is very windy, Monsieur;" and so we began to talk while watching the rising tide, which ran over the sand and covered it with a steel cuirass.

And then the monk told me stories, all the old stories belonging to the place, legends, nothing but legends.

One of them struck me forcibly. The country people, those belonging to the Mornet, declare that at night one can hear talking going on in the sand, and then that one hears two goats bleat, one with a strong, the other with a weak voice. Incredulous people declare that it is nothing but the cry of the sea birds, which occasionally resembles bleatings, and occasionally human lamentations; but belated fishermen swear that they have met an old shepherd, whose head, which is covered by his cloak, they can never see, wandering on the downs, between two tides, round the little town placed so far out of the world, and who is guiding and walking before them, a he-goat with a man's face, and a she-goat with a woman's face, and both of them with white hair; and talking incessantly, quarreling in a strange language, and then suddenly ceasing to talk in order to bleat with all their might.

"Do you believe it?" I asked the monk. "I scarcely know," he replied, and I continued: "If there are other beings besides ourselves on this earth, how comes it that we have not known it for so long a time, or why have you not seen them? How is it that I have not seen them?" He replied: "Do we see the hundred thousandth part of what exists? Look here; there is the wind, which is the strongest force in nature, which knocks down men, and blows down buildings, uproots trees, raises the sea into mountains of water, destroys cliffs and casts great ships onto the breakers; the wind which kills, which whistles, which sighs, which roars—have you ever seen it, and can you see it? It exists for all that, however."

I was silent before this simple reasoning. That man was a philosopher, or perhaps a fool; I could not say which

exactly, so I held my tongue. What he had said, had often been in my own thoughts.

July 3d. I have slept badly; certainly there is some feverish influence here, for my coachman is suffering in the same way as I am. When I went back home yesterday, I noticed his singular paleness, and I asked him: "What is the matter with you, Jean?" "The matter is that I never get any rest, and my nights devour my days. Since your departure, monsieur, there has been a spell over me."

However, the other servants are all well, but I am very frightened of having another attack, myself.

July 4th. I am decidedly taken again; for my old nightmares have returned. Last night I felt somebody leaning on me who was sucking my life from between my lips with his mouth. Yes, he was sucking it out of my neck, like a leech would have done. Then he got up, satiated, and I woke up, so beaten, crushed and annihilated that I could not move. If this continues for a few days, I shall certainly go away again.

July 5th. Have I lost my reason? What has happened, what I saw last night, is so strange, that my head wanders when I think of it!

As I do now every evening, I had locked my door, and then, being thirsty, I drank half a glass of water, and I accidentally noticed that the water bottle was full up to the cut-glass stopper.

Then I went to bed and fell into one of my terrible sleeps, from which I was aroused in about two hours by a still more terrible shock.

Picture to yourself a sleeping man who is being murdered and who wakes up with a knife in his chest, and who is rattling in his throat, covered with blood, and who can no longer breathe, and is going to die, and does not understand anything at all about it—there it is.

Having recovered my senses, I was thirsty again, so I lit a candle and went to the table on which my water bottle was. I lifted it up and tilted it over my glass, but nothing came out. It was empty! It was completely empty! At

first I could not understand it at all, and then suddenly I was seized by such a terrible feeling that I had to sit down, or rather I fell into a chair! Then I sprang up with a bound to look about me, and then I sat down again, overcome by astonishment and fear, in front of the transparent crystal bottle! I looked at it with fixed eyes, trying to conjecture, and my hands trembled! Somebody had drunk the water, but who? I? I without any doubt. It could surely only be I? In that case I was a somnambulist, I lived, without knowing it, that double mysterious life which makes us doubt whether there are not two beings in us, or whether a strange, unknowable and invisible being does not at such moments, when our soul is in a state of torpor, animate our captive body which obeys this other being, as it does us ourselves, and more than it does ourselves.

Oh! Who will understand my horrible agony? Who will understand the emotion of a man who is sound in mind, wide awake, full of sound sense, and who looks in horror at the remains of a little water that has disappeared while he was asleep, through the glass of a water bottle? And I remained there until it was daylight, without venturing to go to bed again.

July 6th. I am going mad. Again all the contents of my water bottle have been drunk during the night—or rather, I have drunk it!

But is it I? Is it I? Who could it be? Who? Oh! God! Am I going mad? Who will save me?

July 10th. I have just been through some surprising ordeals. Decidedly I am mad! And yet!——

On July 6th, before going to bed, I put some wine, milk, water, bread and strawberries on my table. Somebody drank—I drank—all the water and a little of the milk, but neither the wine, bread nor the strawberries were touched.

On the seventh of July I renewed the same experiment, with the same results, and on July 8th, I left out the water and the milk and nothing was touched.

Lastly, on July 9th I put only water and milk on my

table, taking care to wrap up the bottles in white muslin and to tie down the stoppers. Then I rubbed my lips, my beard and my hands with pencil lead, and went to bed.

Irresistible sleep seized me, which was soon followed by a terrible awakening. I had not moved, and my sheets were not marked. I rushed to the table. The muslin round the bottles remained intact; I undid the string, trembling with fear. All the water had been drunk, and so had the milk! Ah! Great God!——

I must start for Paris immediately.

July 12th. Paris. I must have lost my head during the last few days! I must be the plaything of my enervated imagination, unless I am really a somnambulist, or that I have been brought under the power of one of those influences which have been proved to exist, but which have hitherto been inexplicable, which are called suggestions. In any case, my mental state bordered on madness, and twenty-four hours of Paris sufficed to restore me to my equilibrium.

Yesterday after doing some business and paying some visits which instilled fresh and invigorating mental air into me, I wound up my evening at the *Théâtre Français.* A play by Alexandre Dumas the Younger was being acted, and his active and powerful mind completed my cure. Certainly solitude is dangerous for active minds. We require men who can think and can talk, around us. When we are alone for a long time we people space with phantoms.

I returned along the boulevards to my hotel in excellent spirits. Amid the jostling of the crowd I thought, not without irony, of my terrors and surmises of the previous week, because I believed, yes, I believed, that an invisible being lived beneath my roof. How weak our head is, and how quickly it is terrified and goes astray, as soon as we are struck by a small, incomprehensible fact.

Instead of concluding with these simple words: "I do not understand because the cause escapes me," we immediately imagine terrible mysteries and supernatural powers.

July 14th. *Fête* of the Republic. I walked through the streets, and the crackers and flags amused me like a child. Still it is very foolish to be merry on a fixed date, by a Government decree. The populace is an imbecile flock of sheep, now steadily patient, and now in ferocious revolt. Say to it: "Amuse yourself," and it amuses itself. Say to it: "Go and fight with your neighbor," and it goes and fights. Say to it: "Vote for the Emperor," and it votes for the Emperor, and then say to it: "Vote for the Republic," and it votes for the Republic.

Those who direct it are also stupid; but instead of obeying men they obey principles, which can only be stupid, sterile, and false, for the very reason that they are principles, that is to say, ideas which are considered as certain and unchangeable, in this world where one is certain of nothing, since light is an illusion and noise is an illusion.

July 16th. I saw some things yesterday that troubled me very much.

I was dining at my cousin's Madame Sablé, whose husband is colonel of the 76th Chasseurs at Limoges. There were two young women there, one of whom had married a medical man, Dr. Parent, who devotes himself a great deal to nervous diseases and the extraordinary manifestations to which at this moment experiments in hypnotism and suggestion give rise.

He related to us at some length, the enormous results obtained by English scientists and the doctors of the medical school at Nancy, and the facts which he adduced appeared to me so strange, that I declared that I was altogether incredulous.

"We are," he declared, "on the point of discovering one of the most important secrets of nature, I mean to say, one of its most important secrets on this earth, for there are certainly some which are of a different kind of importance up in the stars, yonder. Ever since man has thought, since he has been able to express and write down his thoughts, he has felt himself close to a mystery which

is impenetrable to his coarse and imperfect senses, and he endeavors to supplement the want of power of his organs by the efforts of his intellect. As long as that intellect still remained in its elementary stage, this intercourse with invisible spirits assumed forms whch were commonplace though terrifying. Thence sprang the popular belief in the supernatural, the legends of wandering spirits, of fairies, of gnomes, ghosts, I might even say the legend of God, for our conceptions of the workman-creator, from whatever religion they may have come down to us, are certainly the most mediocre, the stupidest and the most unacceptable inventions that ever sprang from the frightened brain of any human creatures. Nothing is truer than what Voltaire says: 'God made man in His own image, but man has certainly paid Him back again.'

"But for rather more than a century, men seem to have had a presentiment of something new. Mesmer and some others have put us on an unexpected track, and especially within the last two or three years, we have arrived at really surprising results."

My cousin, who is also very incredulous, smiled, and Dr. Parent said to her: "Would you like me to try and send you to sleep, Madame?" "Yes, certainly."

She sat down in an easy-chair, and he began to look at her fixedly, so as to fascinate her. I suddenly felt myself somewhat uncomfortable, with a beating heart and a choking feeling in my throat. I saw that Madame Sablé's eyes were growing heavy, her mouth twitched and her bosom heaved, and at the end of ten minutes she was asleep.

"Stand behind her," the doctor said to me, and so I took a seat behind her. He put a visiting card into her hands, and said to her: "This is a looking-glass; what do you see in it?" And she replied: "I see my cousin." "What is he doing?" "He is twisting his mustache." "And now?" "He is taking a photograph out of his pocket." "Whose photograph is it?" "His own."

That was true, and that photograph had been given me that same evening at the hotel.

"What is his attitude in this portrait?" "He is standing up with his hat in his hand."

So she saw on that card, on that piece of white pasteboard, as if she had seen it in a looking-glass.

The young women were frightened, and exclaimed: "That is quite enough! Quite, quite enough!"

But the doctor said to her authoritatively: "You will get up at eight o'clock to-morrow morning; then you will go and call on your cousin at his hotel and ask him to lend you five thousand francs which your husband demands of you, and which he will ask for when he sets out on his coming journey."

Then he woke her up.

On returning to my hotel, I thought over this curious *séance* and I was assailed by doubts, not as to my cousin's absolute and undoubted good faith, for I had known her as well as if she had been my own sister ever since she was a child, but as to a possible trick on the doctor's part. Had not he, perhaps, kept a glass hidden in his hand, which he showed to the young woman in her sleep, at the same time as he did the card? Professional conjurers do things which are just as singular.

So I went home and to bed, and this morning, at about half-past eight, I was awakened by my footman, who said to me: "Madame Sablé has asked to see you immediately, Monsieur," so I dressed hastily and went to her.

She sat down in some agitation, with her eyes on the floor, and without raising her veil she said to me: "My dear cousin, I am going to ask a great favor of you." "What is it, cousin?" "I do not like to tell you, and yet I must. I am in absolute want of five thousand francs." "What, you?" "Yes, I, or rather my husband, who has asked me to procure them for him."

I was so stupefied that I stammered out my answers. I asked myself whether she had not really been making fun of me with Doctor Parent, if it were not merely a very well-acted farce which had been got up beforehand. On looking at her attentively, however, my doubts disappeared.

She was trembling with grief, so painful was this step to her, and I was sure that her throat was full of sobs.

I knew that she was very rich and so I continued: "What! Has not your husband five thousand francs at his disposal! Come, think. Are you sure that he commissioned you to ask me for them?"

She hesitated for a few seconds, as if she were making a great effort to search her memory, and then she replied: "Yes . . . yes, I am quite sure of it." "He has written to you?"

She hesitated again and reflected, and I guessed the torture of her thoughts. She did not know. She only knew that she was to borrow five thousand francs of me for her husband. So she told a lie. "Yes, he has written to me." "When, pray? You did not mention it to me yesterday." "I received his letter this morning." "Can you show it me?" "No; no . . . no . . . it contained private matters . . . things too personal to ourselves. . . . I burnt it." "So your husband runs into debt?"

She hesitated again, and then murmured: "I do not know." Thereupon I said bluntly: "I have not five thousand francs at my disposal at this moment, my dear cousin."

She uttered a kind of cry as if she were in pain and said: "Oh! oh! I beseech you, I beseech you to get them for me . . ."

She got excited and clasped her hands as if she were praying to me! I heard her voice change its tone; she wept and stammered, harassed and dominated by the irresistible order that she had received.

"Oh! oh! I beg you to . . . if you knew what I am suffering. . . . I want them to-day."

I had pity on her: "You shall have them by and by, I swear to you." "Oh! thank you! thank you! How kind you are!"

I continued: "Do you remember what took place at your house last night?" "Yes." "Do you remember that Doctor Parent sent you to sleep?" "Yes." "Oh! Very well then; he ordered you to come to me this morning to bor-

row five thousand francs, and at this moment you are obeying that suggestion."

She considered for a few moments, and then replied: "But as it is my husband who wants them . . ."

For a whole hour I tried to convince her, but could not succeed, and when she had gone I went to the doctor. He was just going out, and he listened to me with a smile, and said: "Do you believe now?" "Yes, I cannot help it." "Let us go to your cousin's."

She was already dozing on a couch, overcome with fatigue. The doctor felt her pulse, looked at her for some time with one hand raised toward her eyes which she closed by degrees under the irresistible power of this magnetic influence, and when she was asleep, he said:

"Your husband does not require the five thousand francs any longer! You must, therefore, forget that you asked your cousin to lend them to you, and, if he speaks to you about it, you will not understand him."

Then he woke her up, and I took out a pocketbook and said: "Here is what you asked me for this morning, my dear cousin." But she was so surprised that I did not venture to persist; nevertheless, I tried to recall the circumstance to her, but she denied it vigorously, thought that I was making fun of her, and in the end very nearly lost her temper.

. . . . . .

There! I have just come back, and I have not been able to eat any lunch, for this experiment has altogether upset me.

July 19th. Many people to whom I have told the adventure have laughed at me. I no longer know what to think. The wise man says: Perhaps?

July 21st. I dined at Bougival, and then I spent the evening at a boatmen's ball. Decidedly everything depends on place and surroundings. It would be the height of folly to believe in the supernatural on the *île de la Grenouillière*[1] . . . but on the top of Mont Saint-Michel? . . . and in

[1] Frog-island.

India? We are terribly under the influence of our surroundings. I shall return home next week.

July 30th. I came back to my own house yesterday. Everything is going on well.

August 2d. Nothing fresh; it is splendid weather, and I spend my days in watching the Seine flow past.

August 4th. Quarrels among my servants. They declare that the glasses are broken in the cupboards at night. The footman accuses the cook, who accuses the needlewoman, who accuses the other two. Who is the culprit? A clever person, to be able to tell.

August 6th. This time I am not mad. I have seen . . . I have seen . . . I have seen! . . . I can doubt no longer . . . I have seen it! . . .

I was walking at two o'clock among my rose trees, in the full sunlight . . . in the walk bordered by autumn roses which are beginning to fall. As I stopped to look at a *Géant de Bataille*, which had three splendid blooms, I distinctly saw the stalk of one of the roses bend, close to me, as if an invisible hand had bent it, and then break, as if that hand had picked it! Then the flower raised itself, following the curve which a hand would have described in carrying it toward a mouth, and it remained suspended in the transparent air, all alone and motionless, a terrible red spot, three yards from my eyes. In desperation I rushed at it to take it! I found nothing; it had disappeared. Then I was seized with furious rage against myself, for it is not allowable for a reasonable and serious man to have such hallucinations.

But was it a hallucination? I turned round to look for the stalk, and I found it immediately under the bush, freshly broken, between two other roses which remained on the branch, and I returned home then, with a much disturbed mind; for I am certain now, as certain as I am of the alternation of day and night, that there exists close to me an invisible being that lives on milk and on water, which can touch objects, take them and change their places; which is, consequently, endowed with a material nature, although

it is imperceptible to our senses, and which lives as I do, under my roof. . . .

August 7th. I slept tranquilly. He drank the water out of my decanter, but did not disturb my sleep.

I ask myself whether I am mad. As I was walking just now in the sun by the riverside, doubts as to my own sanity arose in me; not vague doubts such as I have had hitherto, but precise and absolute doubts. I have seen mad people, and I have known some who have been quite intelligent, lucid, even clear-sighted in every concern of life, except on one point. They spoke clearly, readily, profoundly on everything, when suddenly their thoughts struck upon the breakers of their madness and broke to pieces there, and were dispersed and foundered in that furious and terrible sea, full of bounding waves, fogs and squalls, which is called *madness.*

I certainly should think that I was mad, absolutely mad, if I were not conscious, did not perfectly know my state, if I did fathom it by analyzing it with the most complete lucidity. I should, in fact, be a reasonable man who was laboring under a hallucination. Some unknown disturbance must have been excited in my brain, one of those disturbances which physiologists of the present day try to note and to fix precisely, and that disturbance must have caused a profound gulf in my mind and in the order and logic of my ideas. Similar phenomena occur in the dreams which lead us through the most unlikely phantasmagoria, without causing us any surprise, because our verifying apparatus and our sense of control has gone to sleep, while our imaginative faculty wakes and works. Is it not possible that one of the imperceptible keys of the cerebral finger-board has been paralyzed in me? Some men lose the recollection of proper names, or of verbs or of numbers or merely of dates, in consequence of an accident. The localization of all the particles of thought has been proved nowadays; what then would there be surprising in the fact that my faculty of controlling the unreality of certain hallucinations should be destroyed for the time being!

I thought of all this as I walked by the side of the water. The sun was shining brightly on the river and made earth delightful, while it filled my looks with love for life, for the swallows, whose agility is always delightful in my eyes, for the plants by the riverside, whose rustling is a pleasure to my ears.

By degrees, however, an inexplicable feeling of discomfort seized me. It seemed to me as if some unknown force were numbing and stopping me, were preventing me from going farther and were calling me back. I felt that painful wish to return which oppresses you when you have left a beloved invalid at home, and when you are seized by a presentiment that he is worse.

I, therefore, returned in spite of myself, feeling certain that I should find some bad news awaiting me, a letter or a telegram. There was nothing, however, and I was more surprised and uneasy than if I had had another fantastic vision.

August 8th. I spent a terrible evening yesterday. He does not show himself any more, but I feel that he is near me, watching me, looking at me, penetrating me, dominating me and more redoubtable when he hides himself thus, than if he were to manifest his constant and invisible presence by supernatural phenomena. However, I slept.

August 9th. Nothing, but I am afraid.

August 10th. Nothing; what will happen to-morrow?

August 11th. Still nothing; I cannot stop at home with this fear hanging over me and these thoughts in my mind; I shall go away.

August 12th. Ten o'clock at night. All day long I have been trying to get away, and have not been able. I wished to accomplish this simple and easy act of liberty—go out—get into my carriage in order to go to Rouen—and I have not been able to do it. What is the reason?

August 13th. When one is attacked by certain maladies, all the springs of our physical being appear to be broken, all our energies destroyed, all our muscles relaxed, our bones to have become as soft as our flesh, and our blood

as liquid as water. I am experiencing that in my moral being in a strange and distressing manner. I have no longer any strength, any courage, any self-control, nor even any power to set my own will in motion. I have no power left to *will* anything, but some one does it for me and I obey.

August 14th. I am lost! Somebody possesses my soul and governs it! Somebody orders all my acts, all my movements, all my thoughts. I am no longer anything in myself, nothing except an enslaved and terrified spectator of all the things which I do. I wish to go out; I cannot. He does not wish to, and so I remain, trembling and distracted in the armchair in which he keeps me sitting. I merely wish to get up and to rouse myself, so as to think that I am still master of myself: I cannot! I am riveted to my chair, and my chair adheres to the ground in such a manner that no force could move us.

Then suddenly, I must, I must go to the bottom of my garden to pick some strawberries and eat them, and I go there. I pick the strawberries and I eat them! Oh! my God! my God! Is there a God? If there be one, deliver me! save me! succor me! Pardon! Pity! Mercy! Save me! Oh! what sufferings! what torture! what horror!

August 15th. Certainly this is the way in which my poor cousin was possessed and swayed, when she came to borrow five thousand francs of me. She was under the power of a strange will which had entered into her, like another soul, like another parasitic and ruling soul. Is the world coming to an end?

But who is he, this invisible being that rules me? This unknowable being, this rover of a supernatural race?

Invisible beings exist, then! How is it then that since the beginning of the world they have never manifested themselves in such a manner precisely as they do to me? I have never read anything which resembles what goes on in my house. Oh! If I could only leave it, if I could only go away and flee, so as never to return, I should be saved; but I cannot.

August 16th. I managed to escape to-day for two hours, like a prisoner who finds the door of his dungeon accidentally open. I suddenly felt that I was free and that he was far away, and so I gave orders to put the horses in as quickly as possible, and I drove to Rouen. Oh! How delightful to be able to say to a man who obeyed you: "Go to Rouen!"

I made him pull up before the library, and I begged them to lend me Dr. Herrmann Herestauss's treatise on the unknown inhabitants of the ancient and modern world.

Then, as I was getting into my carriage, I intended to say: "To the railway station!" but instead of this I shouted —I did not say, but I shouted—in such a loud voice that all the passers-by turned round: "Home!" and I fell back onto the cushion of my carriage, overcome by mental agony. He had found me out and regained possession of me.

August 17th. Oh! What a night! what a night! And yet it seems to me that I ought to rejoice. I read until one o'clock in the morning! Herestauss, Doctor of Philosophy and Theogony, wrote the history and the manifestation of all those invisible beings which hover around man, or of whom he dreams. He describes their origin, their domains, their power; but none of them resembles the one which haunts me. One might say that man, ever since he has thought, has had a foreboding of, and feared a new being, stronger than himself, his successor in this world, and that, feeling him near, and not being able to foretell the nature of that master, he has, in his terror, created the whole race of hidden beings, of vague phantoms born of fear.

Having, therefore, read until one o'clock in the morning, I went and sat down at the open window, in order to cool my forehead and my thoughts, in the calm night air. It was very pleasant and warm! How I should have enjoyed such a night formerly!

There was no moon, but the stars darted out their rays in the dark heavens. Who inhabits those worlds? What forms, what living beings, what animals are there yonder?

What do those who are thinkers in those distant worlds know more than we do? What can they do more than we can? What do they see which we do not know? Will not one of them, some day or other, traversing space, appear on our earth to conquer it, just as the Norsemen formerly crossed the sea in order to subjugate nations more feeble than themselves?

We are so weak, so unarmed, so ignorant, so small, we who live on this particle of mud which turns round in a drop of water.

I fell asleep, dreaming thus in the cool night air, and then, having slept for about three quarters of an hour, I opened my eyes without moving, awakened by I know not what confused and strange sensation. At first I saw nothing, and then suddenly it appeared to me as if a page of a book which had remained open on my table, turned over of its own accord. Not a breath of air had come in at my window, and I was surprised and waited. In about four minutes, I saw, I saw, yes I saw with my own eyes another page lift itself up and fall down on the others, as if a finger had turned it over. My armchair was empty, appeared empty, but I knew that he was there, he, and sitting in my place, and that he was reading. With a furious bound, the bound of an enraged wild beast that wishes to disembowel its tamer, I crossed my room to seize him, to strangle him, to kill him! . . . But before I could reach it, my chair fell over as if somebody had run away from me . . . my table rocked, my lamp fell and went out, and my window closed as if some thief had been surprised and had fled out into the night, shutting it behind him.

So he had run away: he had been afraid; he, afraid of me!

So . . . so . . . to-morrow . . . or later . . . some day or other . . . I should be able to hold him in my clutches and crush him against the ground! Do not dogs occasionally bite and strangle their masters?

August 18th. I have been thinking the whole day long. Oh! yes, I will obey him, follow his impulses, fulfill all his

wishes, show myself humble, submissive, a coward. He is the stronger; but an hour will come . . .

August 19th. I know, . . . I know . . . I know all! I have just read the following in the *Revue du Monde Scientifique:* "A curious piece of news comes to us from Rio de Janeiro. Madness, an epidemic of madness, which may be compared to that contagious madness which attacked the people of Europe in the Middle Ages, is at this moment raging in the Province of San-Paulo. The frightened inhabitants are leaving their houses, deserting their villages, abandoning their land, saying that they are pursued, possessed, governed like human cattle by invisible, though tangible beings, a species of vampire, which feed on their life while they are asleep, and who, besides, drink water and milk without appearing to touch any other nourishment.

"Professor Dom Pedro Henriques, accompanied by several medical savants, has gone to the Province of San-Paulo, in order to study the origin and the manifestations of this surprising madness on the spot, and to propose such measures to the Emperor as may appear to him to be most fitted to restore the mad population to reason."

Ah! Ah! I remember now that fine Brazilian three-master which passed in front of my windows as it was going up the Seine, on the 8th of last May! I thought it looked so pretty, so white and bright! That Being was on board of her, coming from there, where its race sprang from. And it saw me! It saw my house which was also white, and it sprang from the ship onto the land. Oh! Good heavens!

Now I know, I can divine. The reign of man is over, and he has come. He whom disquieted priests exorcised, whom sorcerers evoked on dark nights, without yet seeing him appear, to whom the presentiments of the transient masters of the world lent all the monstrous or graceful forms of gnomes, spirits, genii, fairies, and familiar spirits. After the coarse conceptions of primitive fear, more clear-sighted men foresaw it more clearly. Mesmer divined him,

and ten years ago physicians accurately discovered the nature of his power, even before he exercised it himself. They played with that weapon of their new Lord, the sway of a mysterious will over the human soul, which had become enslaved. They called it magnetism, hypnotism, suggestion . . . what do I know? I have seen them amusing themselves like impudent children with this horrible power! Woe to us! Woe to man! He has come, the . . . the . . . . what does he call himself . . . the . . . I fancy that he is shouting out his name to me and I do not hear him . . . the . . . yes . . . he is shouting it out . . . I am listening . . . I cannot . . . repeat . . . it . . . Horla . . . I have heard . . . the Horla . . . it is he . . . the Horla . . . he has come! . . .

Ah! the vulture has eaten the pigeon, the wolf has eaten the lamb; the lion has devoured the buffalo with sharp horns; man has killed the lion with an arrow, with a sword, with gunpowder; but the Horla will make of man what we have made of the horse and of the ox: his chattel, his slave and his food, by the mere power of his will. Woe to us!

But, nevertheless, the animal sometimes revolts and kills the man who has subjugated it. . . . I should also like . . . I shall be able to . . . but I must know him, touch him, see him! Learned men say that beasts' eyes, as they differ from ours, do not distinguish like ours do . . . And my eye cannot distinguish this newcomer who is oppressing me.

Why? Oh! Now I remember the words of the monk at Mont Saint-Michel: "Can we see the hundred-thousandth part of what exists? Look here; there is the wind which is the strongest force in nature, which knocks men, and blows down buildings, uproots trees, raises the sea into mountains of water, destroys cliffs and casts great ships onto the breakers; the wind which kills, which whistles, which sighs, which roars—have you ever seen it, and can you see it? It exists for all that, however!"

And I went on thinking: my eyes are so weak, so imperfect, that they do not even distinguish hard bodies, if

they are as transparent as glass! . . . If a glass without tinfoil behind it were to bar my way, I should run into it, just as a bird which has flown into a room breaks its head against the window panes. A thousand things, moreover, deceive him and lead him astray. How should it then be surprising that he cannot perceive a fresh body which is traversed by the light?

A new being! Why not? It was assuredly bound to come! Why should we be the last? We do not distinguish it, like all the others created before us. The reason is, that its nature is more perfect, its body finer and more finished than ours, that ours is so weak, so awkwardly conceived, encumbered with organs that are always tired, always on the strain like locks that are too complicated, which lives like a plant and like a beast, nourishing itself with difficulty on air, herbs and flesh, an animal machine which is a prey to maladies, to malformations, to decay; broken-winded, badly regulated, simple and eccentric, ingeniously badly made, a coarse and a delicate work, the outline of a being which might become intelligent and grand.

We are only a few, so few in this world, from the oyster up to man. Why should there not be one more, when once that period is accomplished which separates the successive apparitions from all the different species?

Why not one more? Why not, also, other trees with immense, splendid flowers, perfuming whole regions? Why not other elements besides fire, air, earth and water? There are four, only four, those nursing fathers of various beings! What a pity! Why are they not forty, four hundred, four thousand! How poor everything is, how mean and wretched! grudgingly given, dryly invented, clumsily made! Ah! the elephant and the hippopotamus, what grace! And the camel, what elegance!

But, the butterfly you will say, a flying flower! I dream of one that should be as large as a hundred worlds, with wings whose shape, beauty, colors, and motion I cannot even express. But I see it . . . it flutters from star to star, refreshing them and perfuming them with the light

and harmonious breath of its flight! . . . And the people up there look at it as it passes in an ecstasy of delight! . . .

What is the matter with me? It is he, the Horla who haunts me, and who makes me think of these foolish things! He is within me, he is becoming my soul; I shall kill him!

August 19th. I shall kill him. I have seen him! Yesterday I sat down at my table and pretended to write very assiduously. I knew quite well that he would come prowling round me, quite close to me, so close that I might perhaps be able to touch him, to seize him. And then! . . . then I should have the strength of desperation; I should have my hands, my knees, my chest, my forehead, my teeth to strangle him, to crush him, to bite him, to tear him to pieces. And I watched for him with all my overexcited organs.

I had lighted my two lamps and the eight wax candles on my mantelpiece, as if by this light I could have discovered him.

My bed, my old oak bed with its columns, was opposite to me; on my right was the fireplace; on my left the door which was carefully closed, after I had left it open for some time, in order to attract him; behind me was a very high wardrobe with a looking-glass in it, which served me to make my toilet every day, and in which I was in the habit of looking at myself from head to foot every time I passed it.

So I pretended to be writing in order to deceive him, for he also was watching me, and suddenly I felt, I was certain that he was reading over my shoulder, that he was there, almost touching my ear.

I got up so quickly, with my hands extended, that I almost fell. Eh! well? . . . It was as bright as at midday, but I did not see myself in the glass! . . . It was empty, clear, profound, full of light! But my figure was not reflected in it . . . and I, I was opposite to it! I saw the large, clear glass from top to bottom, and I looked at it

with unsteady eyes; and I did not dare to advance; I did not venture to make a movement, nevertheless, feeling perfectly that he was there, but that he would escape me again, he whose imperceptible body had absorbed my reflection.

How frightened I was! And then suddenly I began to see myself through a mist in the depths of the looking-glass, in a mist as it were through a sheet of water; and it seemed to me as if this water were flowing slowly from left to right, and making my figure clearer every moment. It was like the end of an eclipse. Whatever it was that hid me, did not appear to possess any clearly defined outlines, but a sort of opaque transparency, which gradually grew clearer.

At last I was able to distinguish myself completely, as I do every day when I look at myself.

I had seen it! And the horror of it remained with me and makes me shudder even now.

August 20th. How could I kill it, as I could not get hold of it? Poison? But it would see me mix it with the water; and then, would our poisons have any effect on its impalpable body? No . . . no . . . no doubt about the matter. . . . Then? . . . then? . . .

August 21st. I sent for a blacksmith from Rouen, and ordered iron shutters of him for my room, such as some private hotels in Paris have on the ground floor, for fear of thieves, and he is going to make me a similar door as well. I have made myself out as a coward, but I do not care about that! . . .

September 10th. Rouen, Hotel Continental. It is done; . . . it is done . . . but is he dead? My mind is thoroughly upset by what I have seen.

Well, then, yesterday the locksmith having put on the iron shutters and door, I left everything open until midnight, although it was getting cold.

Suddenly I felt that he was there, and joy, mad joy, took possession of me. I got up softly, and I walked to the right and left for some time, so that he might not guess anything; then I took off my boots and put on my

slippers carelessly; then I fastened the iron shutters and going back to the door quickly I double-locked it with a padlock, putting the key into my pocket.

Suddenly I noticed that he was moving restlessly round me, that in his turn he was frightened and was ordering me to let him out. I nearly yielded, though I did not yet, but putting my back to the door I half opened it, just enough to allow me to go out backward, and as I am very tall, my head touched the lintel. I was sure that he had not been able to escape, and I shut him up quite alone, quite alone. What happiness! I had him fast. Then I ran downstairs; in the drawing-room, which was under my bedroom, I took the two lamps and I poured all the oil onto the carpet, the furniture, everywhere; then I set fire to it and made my escape, after having carefully double-locked the door.

I went and hid myself at the bottom of the garden in a clump of laurel bushes. How long it was! how long it was! Everything was dark, silent, motionless, not a breath of air and not a star, but heavy banks of clouds which one could not see, but which weighed, oh! so heavily on my soul.

I looked at my house and waited. How long it was! I already began to think that the fire had gone out of its own accord, or that he had extinguished it, when one of the lower windows gave way under the violence of the flames, and a long, soft, caressing sheet of red flame mounted up the white wall and kissed it as high as the roof. The light fell onto the trees, the branches, and the leaves, and a shiver of fear pervaded them also! The birds awoke; a dog began to howl, and it seemed to me as if the day were breaking! Almost immediately two other windows flew into fragments, and I saw that the whole of the lower part of my house was nothing but a terrible furnace. But a cry, a horrible, shrill, heartrending cry, a woman's cry, sounded through the night, and two garret windows were opened! I had forgotten the servants! I saw the terrorstruck faces, and their frantically waving arms! . . .

Then, overwhelmed with horror, I set off to run to the village, shouting: "Help! help! fire! fire!" I met some people who were already coming onto the scene, and I went back with them to see!

By this time the house was nothing but a horrible and magnificent funeral pile, a monstrous funeral pile which lit up the whole country, a funeral pile where men were burning, and where he was burning also, He, He, my prisoner, that new Being, the new master, the Horla!

Suddenly the whole roof fell in between the walls, and a volcano of flames darted up to the sky. Through all the windows which opened onto that furnace I saw the flames darting, and I thought that he was there, in that kiln, dead.

Dead? perhaps? . . . His body? Was not his body, which was transparent, indestructible by such means as would kill ours?

If he was not dead? . . . Perhaps time alone has power over that Invisible and Redoubtable Being. Why this transparent, unrecognizable body, this body belonging to a spirit, if it also had to fear ills, infirmities and premature destruction?

Premature destruction? All human terror springs from that! After man the Horla. After him who can die every day, at any hour, at any moment, by any accident, he came who was only to die at his own proper hour and minute, because he had touched the limits of his existence!

No . . . no . . . without any doubt . . . he is not dead. Then . . . then . . . I suppose I must kill myself!

FOOTNOTE.—This story is a tragic experience and prophecy. It was insanity that robbed the world of its most finished short story writer, the author of this tale; and even before his madness became overpowering, de Maupassant complained that he was haunted by his double—by a vision of another Self confronting and threatening him. He had run life at its top speed; this hallucination was the result.

Medical science defines in such cases "an image of memory which differs in intensity from the normal"—that is to say, a fixed idea so persistent and growing that to the thinker it seems utterly real.

—EDITOR.

Pierre Mille

The Miracle of Zobéide

ALWAYS wise and prudent, Zobéide cautiously put aside the myrtle branches and peeped through to see who were the persons talking by the fountain in the cool shadow of the pink sandstone wall. And when she saw that it was only the Rev. John Feathercock, her lord and master, discoursing as usual with Mohammed-si-Koualdia, she went toward them frankly but slowly.

When she was quite near she stopped, and from the light that played in her deep black eyes you would have thought that surely she was listening with the deepest attention. But the truth is that with all her little brain, with all her mouth, and with all her stomach, she was craving the yellow and odorous pulp of a melon which had been cut open and put on the table near two tall glasses half filled with snowy sherbet. For Zobéide was a turtle of the ordinary kind found in the grass of all the meadows around the city of Damascus.

As she waited, Mohammed continued his story:

"And, as I tell you, O reverend one abounding in virtues, this lion which still lives near Tabariat, was formerly a strong lion, a wonderful lion, a lion among lions! To-day, even, he can strike a camel dead with one blow of his paw, and then, plunging his fangs into the spine of the dead animal, toss it upon his shoulders with a single movement of his neck. But unfortunately, having one day brought down a goat in the chase by simply blowing upon it the breath of his nostrils, the lion was inflated with pride and cried: 'There is no god but God, but I am as strong as God. Let him acknowledge it!' Allah, who heard him, Allah, the All-powerful, said in a loud voice, 'O lion of Tabariat,

try now to carry off thy prey!' Then the lion planted his great teeth firmly in the spine of the animal, right under the ears, and attempted to throw it on his back. Onallahi! It was as though he had tried to lift Mount Libanus, and his right leg fell lamed to the ground. And the voice of Allah still held him, declaring: 'Lion, nevermore shalt thou kill a goat!' And it has remained thus to this day: the lion of Tabariat has still all his old-time power to carry off camels, but he can never do the slightest harm to even a new-born kid. The goats of the flocks dance in front of him at night, deriding him to his face, and always from that moment his right leg has been stiff and lame."

"Mohammed," said the Rev. Mr. Feathercock contemptuously, "these are stories fit only for babies."

"How, then!" replied Mohammed-si-Koualdia. "Do you refuse to believe that God is able to do whatever he may wish, that the world itself is but a perpetual dream of God's and that, in consequence, God may change this dream at will? Are you a Christian if you deny the power of the All-powerful?"

"I am a Christian," replied the clergyman with a trace of embarrassment; "but for a long time we have been obliged to admit, we pastors of the civilized Church of the Occident, that God would not be able, without belying himself, to change the order of things which he established when he created the universe. We consider that faith in miracles is a superstition which we must leave to the monks of the Churches of Rome and of Russia, and also to your Mussulmans who live in ignorance of the truth. And it is in order to teach you this truth that I have come here to your country, and at the same time to fight against the pernicious political influence exerted by these same Romish and Greek monks of whom I have just been speaking."

"By invoking the name of Allah," responded Mohammed with intense solemnity, "and by virtue of the collar-bone of the mighty Solomon, I can perform great miracles. You see this turtle before us? I shall cause it to grow each day the breadth of a finger!"

In saying these words he made a sudden movement of his foot toward Zobéide, and Zobéide promptly drew her head into her shell.

"You claim to be able to work a miracle like that!" said the clergyman scornfully. "You, Mohammed, a man immersed in sin, a Mussulman whom I have seen drunk!"

"I was drunk," replied Mohammed calmly, "but not as drunk as others."

"So you think yourself able to force the power of Allah!" pursued Mr. Feathercock, disdaining the interruption.

"I could do it without a moment's difficulty," said Mohammed.

Taking Zobéide in his hand he lifted her to the table. The frightened turtle had again drawn in her head. Nothing could be seen but the black-encircled golden squares of her shell against a background of juicy melon pulp. Mohammed chanted:

"Thou thyself art a miracle, O turtle! For thy head is the head of a serpent, thy tail the tail of a water rat, thy bones are bird's bones and thy covering is of stone; and yet thou knowest love as it is known by men. And from thy eggs, O turtle of stone, other turtles come forth.

"Thou thyself art a miracle, O turtle! For one would say that thou wert a shell, naught but a shell, and behold! thou art a beast that eats. Eat of this melon, O turtle, and grow this night the length of my nail, if Allah permit!

"And when thou hast grown by the breadth of a finger, O turtle, eat further of this melon, or of its sister, another melon, and grow further by the breadth of a finger until thou hast reached the size of a mosque. Thou thyself art a miracle, O shell endowed with life! Perform still another miracle, if Allah permit, if Allah permit!"

Zobéide, reassured by the monotony of his voice, decided at last to come out of her shell. First she showed the point of her little horny nose, then her black eyes, her flat-pointed tail, and finally her strong little claw-tipped feet. Seeing the melon, she made a gesture of assent, and began to eat.

"Nothing in the world will happen!" remarked the Rev. John Feathercock rather doubtfully.

"Wait and see," answered Mohammed gravely. "I shall come back to-morrow!"

The next morning he returned, measured Zobéide with his fingers and declared:

"She has grown!"

"Do you imagine you can make me believe such a thing?" cried Mr. Feathercock anxiously.

"It is written in the Koran," answered Mohammed: "'I swear by the rosy glow which fills the air when the sun is setting, by the shades of the night, and by the light of the moon, that ye shall all change, in substance and in size!' Allah has manifested himself; the size of this turtle has changed. It will continue to change. Measure it yourself and you will see."

Mr. Feathercock did measure Zobéide, and was forced to admit that she had indeed grown the breadth of a finger. He became thoughtful.

Thus day by day Zobéide grew in size, in vigor and in appetite. At first she had only been as big as a saucer, and took each day but a few ounces of nourishment. Then she reached the size of a dessert plate, then of a soup plate. With her strong beak she could split the rind of a melon at a blow; distinctly could be heard the sound of her heavy jaws as she crunched the sweet pulp of the fruits which she loved, and which she devoured in great quantities. In one week she had grown so tremendously that she was as big as a meat platter. The Rev. Mr. Feathercock no longer dared to go near this monster, from whose eyes seemed to glisten a look of deviltry. And, always and forever, apparently devoured by a perpetual hunger, the monster ate.

The members of Mr. Feathercock's flock came to hear that he was keeping in his house a turtle that had been enchanted in the name of Allah and not by the power of the Occidental Divinity: this proved to be anything but helpful to the evangelical labors of the clergyman. But he

himself refused steadily and obstinately to believe in the miracle, although Mohammed-si-Koualdia had never set foot in the house since the day when he had invoked the charm. He remained outside the grounds, seated at the door of a little café, plunged in meditation or in dreams, and consuming hashish in large quantities. At the end of some time Mr. Feathercock succeeded in persuading himself that what he was witnessing was nothing more nor less than a perfectly simple and natural phenomenon, perhaps not well understood hitherto, and due entirely to the extraordinarily favorable action of melon pulp on the physical development of turtles. He decided to cut off Zobéide's supply of melons.

Finally there came a day when Mohammed, drunk with hashish, saw Hakem, Mr. Feathercock's valet, returning from market with a large bunch of fresh greens. He rose majestically, though with features distorted by the drug, and followed the boy with hasty steps.

"Miserable one!" cried he to Mr. Feathercock. "Wretched worm, you have tried to break the charm! Rejoice then, for you have succeeded and it is broken. But let despair follow upon the heels of your rapture, for it is broken in a way that you do not dream. Henceforth your turtle shall *dwindle away* day by day!"

The Rev. Mr. Feathercock tried to laugh, but he did not feel entirely happy. On Sundays, at the services, the few faithful souls who remained in his flock looked upon him with suspicion. At the English consulate they spoke very plainly, telling him unsympathetically that anyone who would make a friend of such a man as Mohammed-si-Koualdia and who would mingle "promiscuously" with such rabble, need look for nothing but harm from it.

Zobéide, when she was first confronted with the fresh, damp greens, showed the most profound contempt for them. Unquestionably she preferred melons. Mr. Feathercock applauded his own acumen. "She was eating too much; that was the whole trouble," he said to himself. "And that was what made her grow so remarkably. If she eats less she

will probably not grow so much. And if she should happen to die, I shall be rid of her. Whatever comes, it will be for the best."

But the next day Zobéide gave up pouting and began very docilely to eat the greens, and when the boy Hakem carried her next bunch to her he said slyly:

"Effendi, she is growing smaller!"

The clergyman attempted to shrug his shoulders, but it was impossible to disguise the fact from himself—Zobéide had certainly shrunk! And within an hour all Damascus knew that Zobéide had shrunk. When Mr. Feathercock went to the barber shop the Greek barber said to him, "Sir, your turtle is no ordinary turtle!" When he went to call on Mrs. Hollingshead, a lady who was always intensely interested in all subjects that she failed to understand and who discussed them with a beautiful freedom, she said to him: "Dear sir, your turtle. How exciting it must be to watch it shrink! I am certainly coming to see it myself." When he went to the Anglican Orphanage, all the little Syrians, all the little Arabs, all the little Armenians, all the little Jews, drew turtles in their copy-books, turtles of every size and every description, the big ones walking behind the little ones, the tail of each in the mouth of another, making an interminable line. And in the street the donkey drivers, the water-carriers, the fishmongers, the venders of broiled meats, of baked breads, of beans, of cream, all cried: "Mister Turtle, Mister Turtle! Try our wares. Buy something for your poor stubborn beast that is pining away!"

And, in truth, the turtle continued to shrink. She became again the size of a soup plate, then of a dessert plate, then of a saucer, till finally one morning there was nothing there but a little round thing, tiny, frail, translucent, a spot about as big as a lady's watch, almost invisible at the base of the fountain. And the next day—ah! the next day there was nothing there, nothing whatever, neither turtle nor the shadow of turtle, or more trace of a turtle than of an elephant in all the grounds!

Mohammed-si-Koualdia had stopped taking hashish, because he was saturated with it. But he remained all day long, huddled in a heap at the door of the little café immediately opposite the clergyman's house, his eyes enlarged out of all proportion, set in a face the color of death, gave him the look of a veritable sorcerer. At this moment the Rev. Mr. Feathercock was returning from a visit to the English consul who had said to him coldly:

"All that I can tell you is that you have made an ass of yourself or, as a Frenchman would say, played the donkey to hear yourself bray. The best thing you can do is to go and hunt up a congregation somewhere else."

The Rev. John Feathercock accepted the advice with deference, and took the train for Bayreuth. That same evening Mohammed-si-Koualdia betook himself to the house of one Antonio, interpreter and public scribe, and ordered him to translate into French the following letter, which he dictated in Arabic. Afterwards he carried this letter to Father Stephen, prior to the monastery of the Greek Hicrosolymites:

"May heaven paint your cheeks with the colors of health, most venerable father, and may happiness reign in your heart! I have the honor to inform you that the Rev. John Feathercock has just left for Bayreuth, but that he has had put upon his trunks the address of a city called Liverpool, which, I am informed, is in the kingdom of England; and also, everything points to the belief that he will never return. Therefore, I dare to hope that you will send me the second part of the reward you agreed upon as well as a generous present for Hakem, Mr. Feathercock's valet, who carried every day a new turtle to the house of the clergyman, and carried away the old one under his cloak.

"I also pray you to tell your friends that I have for sale, at prices exceptionally low, fifty-five turtles, all of different sizes, the last and smallest of which is no larger than the

watch of a European *houri.* I have been at infinite pains to find them, and they have served to prove to me with what exquisite care Allah fashions the members of the least of His creatures and ornaments their bodies with the most delicate designs."

Villiers de l'Isle Adam

The Torture by Hope

MANY years ago, as evening was closing in, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, sixth prior of the Dominicans of Segovia, and third Grand Inquisitor of Spain, followed by a *fra redemptor*, and preceded by two familiars of the Holy Office, the latter carrying lanterns, made their way to a subterranean dungeon. The bolt of a massive door creaked, and they entered a mephitic *in-pace*, where the dim light revealed between rings fastened to the wall a blood-stained rack, a brazier, and a jug. On a pile of straw, loaded with fetters and his neck encircled by an iron carcan, sat a haggard man, of uncertain age, clothed in rags.

This prisoner was no other than Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, a Jew of Arragon, who—accused of usury and pitiless scorn for the poor—had been daily subjected to torture for more than a year. Yet "his blindness was as dense as his hide," and he had refused to abjure his faith.

Proud of a filiation dating back thousands of years, proud of his ancestors—for all Jews worthy of the name are vain of their blood—he descended Talmudically from Othoniel and consequently from Ipsiboa, the wife of the last judge of Israel, a circumstance which had sustained his courage amid incessant torture. With tears in his eyes at the thought of this resolute soul rejecting salvation, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, approaching the shuddering rabbi, addressed him as follows:

"My son, rejoice: your trials here below are about to end. If in the presence of such obstinacy I was forced to permit, with deep regret, the use of great severity, my task of fraternal correction has its limits. You are the fig tree which, having failed so many times to bear fruit, at last withered,

but God alone can judge your soul. Perhaps Infinite Mercy will shine upon you at the last moment! We must hope so. There are examples. So sleep in peace to-night. To-morrow you will be included in the *auto da fé:* that is, you will be exposed to the *quémadero*, the symbolical flames of the Everlasting Fire: it burns, as you know, only at a distance, my son; and Death is at least two hours (often three) in coming, on account of the wet, iced bandages, with which we protect the heads and hearts of the condemned. There will be forty-three of you. Placed in the last row, you will have time to invoke God and offer to Him this baptism of fire, which is of the Holy Spirit. Hope in the Light, and rest."

With these words, having signed to his companions to unchain the prisoner, the prior tenderly embraced him. Then came the turn of the *fra redemptor*, who, in a low tone, entreated the Jew's forgiveness for what he had made him suffer for the purpose of redeeming him; then the two familiars silently kissed him. This ceremony over, the captive was left, solitary and bewildered, in the darkness.

Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, with parched lips and visage worn by suffering, at first gazed at the closed door with vacant eyes. Closed? The word unconsciously roused a vague fancy in his mind, the fancy that he had seen for an instant the light of the lanterns through a chink between the door and the wall. A morbid idea of hope, due to the weakness of his brain, stirred his whole being. He dragged himself toward the strange *appearance.* Then, very gently and cautiously, slipping one finger into the crevice, he drew the door toward him. Marvelous! By an extraordinary accident the familiar who closed it had turned the huge key an instant before it struck the stone casing, so that the rusty bolt not having entered the hole, the door again rolled on its hinges.

The rabbi ventured to glance outside. By the aid of a sort of luminous dusk he distinguished at first a semicircle of walls indented by winding stairs; and opposite to him,

at the top of five or six stone steps, a sort of black portal, opening into an immense corridor, whose first arches only were visible from below.

Stretching himself flat he crept to the threshold. Yes, it was really a corridor, but endless in length. A wan light illumined it: lamps suspended from the vaulted ceiling lightened at intervals the dull hue of the atmosphere—the distance was veiled in shadow. Not a single door appeared in the whole extent! Only on one side, the left, heavily grated loopholes, sunk in the walls, admitted a light which must be that of evening, for crimson bars at intervals rested on the flags of the pavement. What a terrible silence! Yet, yonder, at the far end of that passage there might be a doorway of escape! The Jew's vacillating hope was tenacious, for it was *the last.*

Without hesitating, he ventured on the flags, keeping close under the loopholes, trying to make himself part of the blackness of the long walls. He advanced slowly, dragging himself along on his breast, forcing back the cry of pain when some raw wound sent a keen pang through his whole body.

Suddenly the sound of a sandaled foot approaching reached his ears. He trembled violently, fear stifled him, his sight grew dim. Well, it was over, no doubt. He pressed himself into a niche and, half lifeless with terror, waited.

It was a familiar hurrying along. He passed swiftly by, holding in his clenched hand an instrument of torture—a frightful figure—and vanished. The suspense which the rabbi had endured seemed to have suspended the functions of life, and he lay nearly an hour unable to move. Fearing an increase of tortures if he were captured, he thought of returning to his dungeon. But the old hope whispered in his soul that divine *perhaps,* which comforts us in our sorest trials. A miracle had happened. He could doubt no longer. He began to crawl toward the chance of escape. Exhausted by suffering and hunger, trembling with pain, he pressed onward. The sepulchral corridor seemed to

lengthen mysteriously, while he, still advancing, gazed into the gloom where there *must* be some avenue of escape.

Oh! oh! He again heard footsteps, but this time they were slower, more heavy. The white and black forms of two inquisitors appeared, emerging from the obscurity beyond. They were conversing in low tones, and seemed to be discussing some important subject, for they were gesticulating vehemently.

At this spectacle Rabbi Aser Abarbanel closed his eyes: his heart beat so violently that it almost suffocated him; his rags were damp with the cold sweat of agony; he lay motionless by the wall, his mouth wide open, under the rays of a lamp, praying to the God of David.

Just opposite to him the two inquisitors paused under the light of the lamp—doubtless owing to some accident due to the course of their argument. One, while listening to his companion, gazed at the rabbi! And, beneath the look—whose absence of expression the hapless man did not at first notice—he fancied he again felt the burning pincers scorch his flesh, he was to be once more a living wound. Fainting, breathless, with fluttering eyelids, he shivered at the touch of the monk's floating robe. But—strange yet natural fact—the inquisitor's gaze was evidently that of a man deeply absorbed in his intended reply, engrossed by what he was hearing; his eyes were fixed—and seemed to look at the Jew *without seeing him.*

In fact, after the lapse of a few minutes, the two gloomy figures slowly pursued their way, still conversing in low tones, toward the place whence the prisoner had come; HE HAD NOT BEEN SEEN! Amid the horrible confusion of the rabbi's thoughts, the idea darted through his brain: "Can I be already dead that they did not see me?" A hideous impression roused him from his lethargy: in looking at the wall against which his face was pressed, he imagined he beheld two fierce eyes watching him! He flung his head back in a sudden frenzy of fright, his hair fairly bristling! Yet, no! No. His hand groped over the stones: it was the *reflection* of the inquisitor's eyes, still retained in his

own, which had been refracted from two spots on the wall.

Forward! He must hasten toward that goal which he fancied (absurdly, no doubt) to be deliverance, toward the darkness from which he was now barely thirty paces distant. He pressed forward faster on his knees, his hands, at full length, dragging himself painfully along, and soon entered the dark portion of this terrible corridor.

Suddenly the poor wretch felt a gust of cold air on the hands resting upon the flags; it came from under the little door to which the two walls led.

Oh, Heaven, if that door should open outward. Every nerve in the miserable fugitive's body thrilled with hope. He examined it from top to bottom, though scarcely able to distinguish its outlines in the surrounding darkness. He passed his hand over it: no bolt, no lock! A latch! He started up, the latch yielded to the pressure of his thumb: the door silently swung open before him.

"HALLELUIA!" murmured the rabbi in a transport of gratitude as, standing on the threshold, he beheld the scene before him.

The door had opened into the gardens, above which arched a starlit sky, into spring, liberty, life! It revealed the neighboring fields, stretching toward the sierras, whose sinuous blue lines were relieved against the horizon. Yonder lay freedom! Oh, to escape! He would journey all night through the lemon groves, whose fragrance reached him. Once in the mountains and he was safe! He inhaled the delicious air; the breeze revived him, his lungs expanded! He felt in his swelling heart the *Veni foràs* of Lazarus! And to thank once more the God who had bestowed this mercy upon him, he extended his arms, raising his eyes toward Heaven. It was an ecstasy of joy!

Then he fancied he saw the shadow of his arms approach him—fancied that he felt these shadowy arms inclose, embrace him—and that he was pressed tenderly to some one's breast. A tall figure actually did stand directly before him.

He lowered his eyes—and remained motionless, gasping for breath, dazed, with fixed eyes, fairly driveling with terror.

Horror! He was in the clasp of the Grand Inquisitor himself, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, who gazed at him with tearful eyes, like a good shepherd who had found his stray lamb.

The dark-robed priest pressed the hapless Jew to his heart with so fervent an outburst of love, that the edges of the monochal haircloth rubbed the Dominican's breast. And while Aser Abarbanel with protruding eyes gasped in agony in the ascetic's embrace, vaguely comprehending that *all the phases of this fatal evening were only a prearranged torture, that of* HOPE, the Grand Inquisitor, with an accent of touching reproach and a look of consternation, murmured in his ear, his breath parched and burning from long fasting:

"What, my son! On the eve, perchance, of salvation—you wished to leave us?"

Erckmann-Chatrian

The Owl's Ear

ON the 29th of July, 1835, Kasper Boeck, a shepherd of the little village of Hirschwiller, with his large felt hat tipped back, his wallet of stringy sackcloth hanging at his hip, and his great tawny dog at his heels, presented himself at about nine o'clock in the evening at the house of the burgomaster, Petrus Mauerer, who had just finished supper and was taking a little glass of kirchwasser to facilitate digestion.

This burgomaster was a tall, thin man, and wore a bushy gray mustache. He had seen service in the armies of the Archduke Charles. He had a jovial disposition, and ruled the village, it is said, with his finger and with the rod.

"Mr. Burgomaster," cried the shepherd in evident excitement.

But Petrus Mauerer, without awaiting the end of his speech, frowned and said:

"Kasper Boeck, begin by taking off your hat, put your dog out of the room, and then speak distinctly, intelligibly, without stammering, so that I may understand you."

Hereupon the burgomaster, standing near the table, tranquilly emptied his little glass and wiped his great gray mustachios indifferently.

Kasper put his dog out, and came back with his hat off.

"Well!" said Petrus, seeing that he was silent, "what has happened?"

"It happens that the *spirit* has appeared again in the ruins of Geierstein!"

"Ha! I doubt it. You've seen it yourself?"

"Very clearly, Mr. Burgomaster."

"Without closing your eyes?"

"Yes, Mr. Burgomaster—my eyes were wide open. There was plenty of moonlight."

"What form did it have?"

"The form of a small man."

"Good!"

And turning toward a glass door at the left:

"Katel!" cried the burgomaster.

An old serving woman opened the door.

"Sir?"

"I am going out for a walk—on the hillside—sit up for me until ten o'clock. Here's the key."

"Yes, sir."

Then the old soldier took down his gun from the hook over the door, examined the priming, and slung it over his shoulder; then he addressed Kasper Boeck:

"Go and tell the rural guard to meet me in the holly path, and tell him behind the mill. Your *spirit* must be some marauder. But if it's a fox, I'll make a fine hood of it, with long earlaps."

Master Petrus Mauerer and humble Kasper then went out. The weather was superb, the stars innumerable. While the shepherd went to knock at the rural guard's door, the burgomaster plunged among the elder bushes, in a little lane that wound around behind the old church.

Two minutes later Kasper and Hans Gœrner, whinger at his side, by running overtook Master Petrus in the holly path.

All three made their way together toward the ruins of Geierstein.

These ruins, which are twenty minutes' walk from the village, seem to be insignificant enough; they consist of the ridges of a few decrepit walls, from four to six feet high, which extend among the brier bushes. Archæologists call them the aqueducts of Seranus, the Roman camp of Holderlock, or vestiges of Theodoric, according to their fantasy. The only thing about these ruins which could be considered remarkable is a stairway to a cistern cut in the rock. Inside of this spiral staircase, instead of con-

centric circles which twist around with each complete turn, the involutions become wider as they proceed, in such a way that the bottom of the pit is three times as large as the opening. Is it an architectural freak, or did some reasonable cause determine such an odd construction? It matters little to us. The result was to cause in the cistern that vague reverberation which anyone may hear upon placing a shell at his ear, and to make you aware of steps on the gravel path, murmurs of the air, rustling of the leaves, and even distant words spoken by people passing the foot of the hill.

Our three personages then followed the pathway between the vineyards and gardens of Hirschwiller.

"I see nothing," the burgomaster would say, turning up his nose derisively.

"Nor I either," the rural guard would repeat, imitating the other's tone.

"It's down in the hole," muttered the shepherd.

"We shall see, we shall see," returned the burgomaster.

It was in this fashion, after a quarter of an hour, that they came upon the opening of the cistern. As I have said, the night was clear, limpid, and perfectly still.

The moon portrayed, as far as the eye could reach, one of those nocturnal landscapes in bluish lines, studded with slim trees, the shadows of which seemed to have been drawn with a black crayon. The blooming brier and broom perfumed the air with a rather sharp odor, and the frogs of a neighboring swamp sang their oily anthem, interspersed with silences. But all these details escaped the notice of our good rustics; they thought of nothing but laying hands on the *spirit.*

When they had reached the stairway, all three stopped and listened, then gazed into the dark shadows. Nothing appeared—nothing stirred.

"The devil!" said the burgomaster, "we forgot to bring a bit of candle. Descend, Kasper, you know the way better than I—I'll follow you."

At this proposition the shepherd recoiled promptly. If

he had consulted his inclinations the poor man would have taken to flight; his pitiful expression made the burgomaster burst out laughing.

"Well, Hans, since he doesn't want to go down, show me the way," he said to the game warden.

"But, Mr. Burgomaster," said the latter, "you know very well that steps are missing; we should risk breaking our necks."

"Then what's to be done?"

"Yes, what's to be done?"

"Send your dog," replied Petrus.

The shepherd whistled to his dog, showed him the stairway, urged him—but he did not wish to take the chances any more than the others.

At this moment, a bright idea struck the rural guardsman.

"Ha! Mr. Burgomaster," said he, "if you should fire your gun inside."

"Faith," cried the other, "you're right, we shall catch a glimpse at least."

And without hesitating the worthy man approached the stairway and leveled his gun.

But, by the acoustic effect which I have already pointed out, the *spirit*, the marauder, the individual who chanced to be actually in the cistern, had heard everything. The idea of stopping a gunshot did not strike him as amusing, for in a shrill, piercing voice he cried:

"Stop! Don't fire—I'm coming."

Then the three functionaries looked at each other and laughed softly, and the burgomaster, leaning over the opening again, cried rudely:

"Be quick about it, you varlet, or I'll shoot! Be quick about it!"

He cocked his gun, and the click seemed to hasten the ascent of the mysterious person; they heard him rolling down some stones. Nevertheless it still took him another minute before he appeared, the cistern being at a depth of sixty feet.

What was this man doing in such deep darkness? He must be some great criminal! So at least thought Petrus Mauerer and his acolytes.

At last a vague form could be discerned in the dark, then slowly, by degrees, a little man, four and a half feet high at the most, frail, ragged, his face withered and yellow, his eye gleaming like a magpie's, and his hair tangled, came out shouting:

"By what right do you come to disturb my studies, wretched creatures?"

This grandiose apostrophe was scarcely in accord with his costume and physiognomy. Accordingly the burgomaster indignantly replied:

"Try to show that you're honest, you knave, or I'll begin by administering a correction."

"A correction!" said the little man, leaping with anger, and drawing himself up under the nose of the burgomaster.

"Yes," replied the other, who, nevertheless, did not fail to admire the pygmy's courage; "if you do not answer the questions satisfactorily I am going to put to you. I am the burgomaster of Hirschwiller; here are the rural guard, the shepherd and his dog. We are stronger than you—be wise and tell me peaceably who you are, what you are doing here, and why you do not dare to appear in broad daylight. Then we shall see what's to be done with you."

"All that's none of your business," replied the little man in his cracked voice. "I shall not answer."

"In that case, forward, march," ordered the burgomaster, who grasped him firmly by the nape of the neck; "you are going to sleep in prison."

The little man writhed like a weasel; he even tried to bite, and the dog was sniffing at the calves of his legs, when, quite exhausted, he said, not without a certain dignity:

"Let go, sir, I surrender to superior force—I'm yours!"

The burgomaster, who was not entirely lacking in good breeding, became calmer.

"Do you promise?" said he.

"I promise!"

"Very well—walk in front."

And that is how, on the night of the 29th of July, 1835, the burgomaster took captive a little red-haired man, issuing from the cavern of Geierstein.

Upon arriving at Hirschwiller the rural guard ran to find the key of the prison and the vagabond was locked in and double-locked, not to forget the outside bolt and padlock.

Everyone then could repose after his fatigues, and Petrus Mauerer went to bed and dreamed till midnight of this singular adventure.

On the morrow, toward nine o'clock, Hans Gœrner, the rural guard, having been ordered to bring the prisoner to the town house for another examination, repaired to the cooler with four husky daredevils. They opened the door, all of them curious to look upon the Will-o'-the-wisp. But imagine their astonishment upon seeing him hanging from the bars of the window by his necktie! Some said that he was still writhing; others that he was already stiff. However that may be, they ran to Petrus Mauerer's house to inform him of the fact, and what is certain is that upon the latter's arrival the little man had breathed his last.

The justice of the peace and the doctor of Hirschwiller drew up a formal statement of the catastrophe; then they buried the unknown in a field of meadow grass and it was all over!

Now about three weeks after these occurrences, I went to see my cousin, Petrus Mauerer, whose nearest relative I was, and consequently his heir. This circumstance sustained an intimate acquaintance between us. We were at dinner, talking on indifferent matters, when the burgomaster recounted the foregoing little story, as I have just reported it.

"'Tis strange, cousin," said I, "truly strange. And you have no other information concerning the unknown?"

"None."

"And you have found nothing which could give you a clew as to his purpose?"

"Absolutely nothing, Christian."

"But, as a matter of fact, what could he have been doing in the cistern? On what did he live?"

The burgomaster shrugged his shoulders, refilled our glasses, and replied with:

"To your health, cousin."

"To yours."

We remained silent a few minutes. It was impossible for me to accept the abrupt conclusion of the adventure, and, in spite of myself, I mused with some melancholy on the sad fate of certain men who appear and disappear in this world like the grass of the field, without leaving the least memory or the least regret.

"Cousin," I resumed, "how far may it be from here to the ruins of Geierstein?"

"Twenty minutes' walk at the most. Why?"

"Because I should like to see them."

"You know that we have a meeting of the municipal council, and that I can't accompany you."

"Oh! I can find them by myself."

"No, the rural guard will show you the way; he has nothing better to do."

And my worthy cousin, having rapped on his glass, called his servant:

"Katel, go and find Hans Gœrner—let him hurry, and get here by two o'clock. I must be going."

The servant went out and the rural guard was not tardy in coming.

He was directed to take me to the ruins.

While the burgomaster proceeded gravely toward the hall of the municipal council, we were already climbing the hill. Hans Gœrner, with a wave of the hand, indicated the remains of the aqueduct. At the same moment the rocky ribs of the plateau, the blue distances of Hundsrück, the sad crumbling walls covered with somber ivy, the tolling of the Hirschwiller bell summoning the notables to the

council, the rural guardsman panting and catching at the brambles—assumed in my eyes a sad and severe tinge, for which I could not account: it was the story of the hanged man which took the color out of the prospect.

The cistern staircase struck me as being exceedingly curious, with its elegant spiral. The bushes bristling in the fissures at every step, the deserted aspect of its surroundings, all harmonized with my sadness. We descended, and soon the luminous point of the opening, which seemed to contract more and more, and to take the shape of a star with curved rays, alone sent us its pale light. When we attained the very bottom of the cistern, we found a superb sight was to be had of all those steps, lighted from above and cutting off their shadows with marvelous precision. I then heard the hum of which I have already spoken: the immense granite conch had as many echoes as stones!

"Has nobody been down here since the little man?" I asked the rural guardsman.

"No, sir. The peasants are afraid. They imagine that the hanged man will return."

"And you?"

"I—oh, I'm not curious."

"But the justice of the peace? His duty was to——"

"Ha! What could he have come to the *Owl's Ear* for?"

"They call this the *Owl's Ear*?"

"Yes."

"That's pretty near it," said I, raising my eyes. "This reversed vault forms the *pavilion* well enough; the under side of the steps makes the covering of the *tympanum*, and the winding of the staircase the *cochlea*, the *labyrinth*, and *vestibule* of the ear. That is the cause of the murmur which we hear: we are at the back of a colossal ear."

"It's very likely," said Hans Gœrner, who did not seem to have understood my observations.

We started up again, and I had ascended the first steps when I felt something crush under my foot; I stopped to see what it could be, and at that moment perceived a white

object before me. It was a torn sheet of paper. As for the hard object, which I had felt grinding up, I recognized it as a sort of glazed earthenware jug.

"Aha!" I said to myself; "this may clear up the burgomaster's story."

I rejoined Hans Gœrner, who was now waiting for me at the edge of the pit.

"Now, sir," cried he, "where would you like to go?"

"First, let's sit down for a while. We shall see presently."

I sat down on a large stone, while the rural guard cast his falcon eyes over the village to see if there chanced to be any trespassers in the gardens. I carefully examined the glazed vase, of which nothing but splinters remained. These fragments presented the appearance of a funnel, lined with wool. It was impossible for me to perceive its purpose. I then read the piece of a letter, written in an easy running and firm hand. I transcribe it here below, word for word. It seems to follow the other half of the sheet, for which I looked vainly all about the ruins:

"My *micracoustic* ear trumpet thus has the double advantage of infinitely multiplying the intensity of sounds, and of introducing them into the ear without causing the observer the least discomfort. You would never have imagined, dear master, the charm which one feels in perceiving these thousands of imperceptible sounds which are confounded, on a fine summer day, in an immense murmuring. The bumble-bee has his song as well as the nightingale, the honey-bee is the warbler of the mosses, the cricket is the lark of the tall grass, the maggot is the wren —it has only a sigh, but the sigh is melodious!

"This discovery, from the point of view of sentiment, which makes us live in the universal life, surpasses in its importance all that I could say on the matter.

"After so much suffering, privations, and weariness, how happy it makes one to reap the rewards of all his labors! How the soul soars toward the divine Author of all these

microscopic worlds, the magnificence of which is revealed to us! Where now are the long hours of anguish, hunger, contempt, which overwhelmed us before? Gone, sir, gone! Tears of gratitude moisten our eyes. One is proud to have achieved, through suffering, new joys for humanity and to have contributed to its mental development. But howsoever vast, howsoever admirable may be the first fruits of my *micracoustic* ear trumpet, these do not delimit its advantages. There are more positive ones, more material, and ones which may be expressed in figures.

"Just as the telescope brought the discovery of myriads of worlds performing their harmonious revolutions in infinite space—so also will my *micracoustic* ear trumpet extend the sense of the unhearable beyond all possible bounds. Thus, sir, the circulation of the blood and the fluids of the body will not give me pause; you shall hear them flow with the impetuosity of cataracts; you shall perceive them so distinctly as to startle you; the slightest irregularity of the pulse, the least obstacle, is striking, and produces the same effect as a rock against which the waves of a torrent are dashing!

"It is doubtless an immense conquest in the development of our knowledge of physiology and pathology, but this is not the point on which I would emphasize. Upon applying your ear to the ground, sir, you may hear the mineral waters springing up at immeasurable depths; you may judge of their volume, their currents, and the obstacles which they meet!

"Do you wish to go further? Enter a subterranean vault which is so constructed as to gather a quantity of loud sounds; then at night when the world sleeps, when nothing will be confused with the interior noises of our globe—listen!

"Sir, all that it is possible for me to tell you at the present moment—for in the midst of my profound misery, of my privations, and often of my despair, I am left only a few lucid instants to pursue my geological observations—all that I can affirm is that the seething of glow worms,

the explosions of boiling fluids, is something terrifying and sublime, which can only be compared to the impression of the astronomer whose glass fathoms depths of limitless extent.

"Nevertheless, I must avow that these impressions should be studied further and classified in a methodical manner, in order that definite conclusions may be derived therefrom. Likewise, as soon as you shall have deigned, dear and noble master, to transmit the little sum for use at Neustadt as I asked, to supply my first needs, we shall see our way to an understanding in regard to the establishment of three great subterranean observatories, one in the valley of Catania, another in Iceland, then a third in Capac-Uren, Songay, or Cayembé-Uren, the deepest of the Cordilleras, and consequently——"

Here the letter stopped.

I let my hands fall in stupefaction. Had I read the conceptions of an idiot—or the inspirations of a genius which had been realized? What am I to say? to think? So this man, this miserable creature, living at the bottom of a burrow like a fox, dying of hunger, had had perhaps one of those inspirations which the Supreme Being sends on earth to enlighten future generations!

And this man had hanged himself in disgust, despair! No one had answered his prayer, though he asked only for a crust of bread in exchange for his discovery. It was horrible. Long, long I sat there dreaming, thanking Heaven for having limited my intelligence to the needs of ordinary life—for not having desired to make me a superior man in the community of martyrs. At length the rural guardsman, seeing me with fixed gaze and mouth agape, made so bold as to touch me on the shoulder.

"Mr. Christian," said he, "see—it's getting late—the burgomaster must have come back from the council."

"Ha! That's a fact," cried I, crumpling up the paper, "come on."

We descended the hill.

My worthy cousin met me, with a smiling face, at the threshold of his house.

"Well! well! Christian, so you've found no trace of the imbecile who hanged himself?"

"No."

"I thought as much. He was some lunatic who escaped from Stefansfeld or somewhere— Faith, he did well to hang himself. When one is good for nothing, that's the simplest way for it."

The following day I left Hirschwiller. I shall never return.

The Invisible Eye

About this time (said Christian), poor as a church mouse, I took refuge in the roof of an old house in Minnesänger Street, Nuremberg, and made my nest in the corner of the garret.

I was compelled to work over my straw bed to reach the window, but this window was in the gable end, and the view from it was magnificent, both town and country being spread out before me.

I could see the cats walking gravely in the gutters; the storks, their beaks filled with frogs, carrying nourishment to their ravenous brood; the pigeons, springing from their cotes, their tails spread like fans, hovering over the streets.

In the evening, when the bells called the world to the Angelus, with my elbows upon the edge of the roof, I listened to their melancholy chimes; I watched the windows as, one by one, they were lighted up; the good burghers smoking their pipes on the sidewalks; the young girls in their red skirts, with their pitchers under their arms, laughing and chatting around the fountain "Saint Sebalt." Insensibly all this faded away, the bats commenced their rapid course, and I retired to my mattress in sweet peace and tranquillity.

The old curiosity seller, Toubac, knew the way to my

little lodging as well as I did, and was not afraid to climb the ladder. Every week his ugly head, adorned with a reddish cap, raised the trapdoor, his fingers grasped the ledge, and he cried out in a nasal tone:

"Well, well, Master Christian, have you anything?"

To which I replied:

"Come in. Why in the devil don't you come in? I am just finishing a little landscape, and you must tell me what you think of it."

Then his great back, seeming to elongate, grew up, even to the roof, and the good man laughed silently.

I must do justice to Toubac: he never haggled with me about prices; he bought all my paintings at fifteen florins, one with the other, and sold them again for forty each. "This was an honest Jew!"

I began to grow fond of this mode of existence, and to find new charms in it day by day.

Just at this time the city of Nuremberg was agitated by a strange and mysterious event. Not far from my dormer window, a little to the left, stood the Inn Bœuf-Gras, an old *auberge* much patronized throughout the country. Three or four wagons, filled with sacks or casks, were always drawn up before the door, where the rustic drivers were in the habit of stopping, on their way to the market, to take their morning draught of wine.

The gable end of the inn was distinguished by its peculiar form. It was very narrow, pointed, and, on two sides, cut-in teeth, like a saw. The carvings were strangely grotesque, interwoven and ornamenting the cornices and surrounding the windows; but the most remarkable fact was that the house opposite reproduced exactly the same sculptures, the same ornaments; even the signboard, with its post and spiral of iron, was exactly copied.

One might have thought that these two ancient houses reflected each other. Behind the inn, however, was a grand old oak, whose somber leaves darkened the stones of the roof, while the other house stood out in bold relief against the sky. To complete the description, this old building was

as silent and dreary as the Inn Bœuf-Gras was noisy and animated.

On one side, a crowd of merry drinkers were continually entering in and going out, singing, tripping, cracking their whips; on the other, profound silence reigned.

Perhaps, once or twice during the day, the heavy door seemed to open of itself, to allow a little old woman to go out, with her back almost in a semicircle, her dress fitting tight about her hips, an enormous basket on her arm, and her hand contracted against her breast.

It seemed to me that I saw at a glance, as I looked upon her, a whole existence of good works and pious meditations.

The physiognomy of this old woman had struck me more than once: her little green eyes, long, thin nose, the immense bouquets of flowers on her shawl, which must have been at least a hundred years old, the withered smile which puckered her cheeks into a cockade, the lace of her bonnet falling down to her eyebrows—all this was fantastic, and interested me much. Why did this old woman live in this great deserted house? I wished to explore the mystery.

One day as I paused in the street and followed her with my eyes, she turned suddenly and gave me a look, the horrible expression of which I know not how to paint; made three or four hideous grimaces, and then, letting her palsied head fall upon her breast, drew her great shawl closely around her, and advanced slowly to the heavy door, behind which I saw her disappear.

"She's an old fool!" I said to myself, in a sort of stupor. My faith, it was the height of folly in me to be interested in her!

However, I would like to see her grimace again; old Toubac would willingly give me fifteen florins if I could paint it for him.

I must confess that these pleasantries of mine did not entirely reassure me.

The hideous glance which the old shrew had given me pursued me everywhere. More than once, while climbing

the almost perpendicular ladder to my loft, feeling my clothing caught on some point, I trembled from head to foot, imagining that the old wretch was hanging to the tails of my coat in order to destroy me.

Toubac, to whom I related this adventure, was far from laughing at it; indeed, he assumed a grave and solemn air.

"Master Christian," said he, "if the old woman wants you, take care! Her teeth are small, pointed, and of marvelous whiteness, and that is not natural at her age. She has an 'evil eye.' Children flee from her, and the people of Nuremberg call her 'Fledermausse.'"

I admired the clear, sagacious intellect of the Jew, and his words gave me cause for reflection.

Several weeks passed away, during which I often encountered Fledermausse without any alarming consequences. My fears were dissipated, and I thought of her no more.

But an evening came, during which, while sleeping very soundly, I was awakened by a strange harmony. It was a kind of vibration, so sweet, so melodious, that the whispering of the breeze among the leaves can give but a faint idea of its charm.

For a long time I listened intently, with my eyes wide open, and holding my breath, so as not to lose a note. At last I looked toward the window, and saw two wings fluttering against the glass. I thought, at first, that it was a bat, caught in my room; but, the moon rising at that instant, I saw the wings of a magnificent butterfly of the night delineated upon her shining disk. Their vibrations were often so rapid that they could not be distinguished; then they reposed, extended upon the glass, and their frail fibers were again brought to view.

This misty apparition, coming in the midst of the universal silence, opened my heart to all sweet emotions. It seemed to me that an airy sylph, touched with a sense of my solitude, had come to visit me, and this idea melted me almost to tears.

"Be tranquil, sweet captive, be tranquil," said I; "your

confidence shall not be abused. I will not keep you against your will. Return to heaven and to liberty." I then opened my little window. The night was calm, and millions of stars were glittering in the sky. For a moment I contemplated this sublime spectacle, and words of prayer and praise came naturally to my lips; but, judge of my amazement, when, lowering my eyes, I saw a man hanging from the crossbeam of the sign of the Bœuf-Gras, the hair disheveled, the arms stiff, the legs elongated to a point, and casting their gigantic shadows down to the street!

The immobility of this figure under the moon's rays was terrible. I felt my tongue freezing, my teeth clinched. I was about to cry out in terror when, by some incomprehensible mysterious attraction, my glance fell below, and I distinguished, confusedly, the old woman crouched at her window in the midst of dark shadows, and contemplating the dead man with an air of diabolic satisfaction.

Then I had a vertigo of terror. All my strength abandoned me, and, retreating to the wall of my loft, I sank down and became insensible.

I do not know how long this sleep of death continued. When restored to consciousness, I saw that it was broad day. The mists of the night had penetrated to my garret, and deposited their fresh dew upon my hair, and the confused murmurs of the street ascended to my little lodging. I looked without. The burgomaster and his secretary were stationed at the door of the inn, and remained there a long time; crowds of people came and went, and paused to look in; then recommenced their course. The good women of the neighborhood, who were sweeping before their doors, looked on from afar, and talked gravely with each other.

At last a litter, and upon this litter a body, covered with a linen cloth, issued from the inn, carried by two men. They descended to the street, and the children, on their way to school, ran behind them.

All the people drew back as they advanced.

The window opposite was still open; the end of a rope floated from the crossbeam.

I had not dreamed. I had, indeed, seen the butterfly of the night; I had seen the man hanging, and I had seen Fledermausse.

That day Toubac made me a visit, and, as his great nose appeared on a level with the floor, he exclaimed:

"Master Christian, have you nothing to sell?"

I did not hear him. I was seated upon my one chair, my hands clasped upon my knees, and my eyes fixed before me.

Toubac, surprised at my inattention, repeated in a louder voice:

"Master Christian, Master Christian!" Then, striding over the sill, he advanced and struck me on the shoulder.

"Well, well, what is the matter now?"

"Ah, is that you, Toubac?"

"Eh, *parbleu*! I rather think so; are you ill?"

"No, I am only thinking."

"What in the devil are you thinking about?"

"Of the man who was hanged."

"Oh, oh!" cried the curiosity vender. "You have seen him, then? The poor boy! What a singular history! The third in the same place."

"How—the third?"

"Ah, yes! I ought to have warned you; but it is not too late. There will certainly be a fourth, who will follow the example of the others. *Il n'y à que le premier pas qui coûte.*"

Saying this, Toubac took a seat on the corner of my trunk, struck his match-box, lighted his pipe, and blew three or four powerful whiffs of smoke with a meditative air.

"My faith," said he, "I am not fearful; but, if I had full permission to pass the night in that chamber, I should much prefer to sleep elsewhere.

"Listen, Master Christian. Nine or ten months ago a good man of Tübingen, wholesale dealer in furs, dismounted at the Inn Bœuf-Gras. He called for supper; he ate well; he drank well; and was finally conducted to that room in

the third story—it is called the Green Room. Well, the next morning he was found hanging to the crossbeam of the signboard.

"Well, that might do *for once*; nothing could be said.

"Every proper investigation was made, and the stranger was buried at the bottom of the garden. But, look you, about six months afterwards a brave soldier from Neustadt arrived; he had received his final discharge, and was rejoicing in the thought of returning to his native village. During the whole evening, while emptying his wine cups, he spoke fondly of his little cousin who was waiting to marry him. At last this big monsieur was conducted to his room—the Green Room—and, the same night, the watchman, passing down the street Minnesänger, perceived something hanging to the crossbeam; he raised his lantern, and lo! it was the soldier, with his final discharge in a bow on his left hip, and his hands gathered up to the seam of his pantaloons, as if on parade.

"'Truth to say, this is extraordinary!' cried the burgomaster; 'the devil's to pay.' Well, the chamber was much visited; the walls were replastered, and the dead man was sent to Neustadt.

"The registrar wrote this marginal note:

"'Died of apoplexy.'

"All Nuremberg was enraged against the innkeeper. There were many, indeed, who wished to force him to take down his iron crossbeam, under the pretext that it inspired people with dangerous ideas; but you may well believe that old Michael Schmidt would not lend his ear to this proposition.

"'This crossbeam,' said he, 'was placed here by my grandfather; it has borne the sign of Bœuf-Gras for one hundred and fifty years, from father to son; it harms no one, not even the hay wagons which pass beneath, for it is thirty feet above them. Those who don't like it can turn their heads aside, and not see it.'

"Well, gradually the town calmed down, and, during several months, no new event agitated it. Unhappily, a

student of Heidelberg, returning to the university, stopped, day before yesterday, at the Inn Bœuf-Gras, and asked for lodging. He was the son of a minister of the gospel.

"How could anyone suppose that the son of a pastor could conceive the idea of hanging himself on the crossbeam of a signboard, because a big monsieur and an old soldier had done so? We must admit, Master Christian, that the thing was not probable; these reasons would not have seemed sufficient to myself or to you."

"Enough, enough!" I exclaimed; "this is too horrible! I see a frightful mystery involved in all this. It is not the crossbeam; it is not the room——"

"What! Do you suspect the innkeeper, the most honest man in the world, and belonging to one of the oldest families in Nuremberg?"

"No, no; may God preserve me from indulging in unjust suspicions! but there is an abyss before me, into which I scarcely dare glance."

"You are right," said Toubac, astonished at the violence of my excitement. "We will speak of other things. Apropos, Master Christian, where is our landscape of 'Saint Odille'?"

This question brought me back to the world of realities. I showed the old man the painting I had just completed. The affair was soon concluded, and Toubac, well satisfied, descended the ladder, entreating me to think no more of the student of Heidelberg.

I would gladly have followed my good friend's counsel; but, when the devil once mixes himself up in our concerns, it is not easy to disembarrass ourselves of him.

In my solitary hours all these events were reproduced with frightful distinctness in my mind.

"This old wretch," I said to myself, "is the cause of it all; she alone has conceived these crimes, and has consummated them. But by what means? Has she had recourse to cunning alone, or has she obtained the intervention of invisible powers?" I walked to and fro in my retreat. An inward voice cried out: "It is not in vain that

Providence permitted you to see Fledermausse contemplating the agonies of her victim. It is not in vain that the soul of the poor young man came in the form of a butterfly of the night to awake you. No, no; all this was not accidental, Christian. The heavens impose upon you a terrible mission. If you do not accomplish it, tremble lest you fall yourself into the hands of the old murderess! Perhaps, at this moment, she is preparing her snares in the darkness."

During several days these hideous images followed me without intermission. I lost my sleep; it was impossible for me to do anything; my brush fell from my hand; and, horrible to confess, I found myself sometimes gazing at the crossbeam with a sort of complacency. At last I could endure it no longer, and one evening I descended the ladder and hid myself behind the door of Fledermausse, hoping to surprise her fatal secret.

From that time no day passed in which I was not *en route*, following the old wretch, watching, spying, never losing sight of her; but she was so cunning, had a scent so subtile that, without even turning her head, she knew I was behind her.

However, she feigned not to perceive this; she went to the market, to the butcher's, like any good, simple woman, only hastening her steps and murmuring confused words.

At the close of the month I saw that it was impossible for me to attain my object in this way, and this conviction made me inexpressibly sad.

"What can I do?" I said to myself. "The old woman divines my plans; she is on her guard; every hope abandons me. Ah! old hag, you think you already see me at the end of your rope." I was continually asking myself this question: "What can I do? what can I do?" At last a luminous idea struck me. My chamber overlooked the house of Fledermausse; but there was no window on this side. I adroitly raised a slate, and no pen could paint my joy when the whole ancient building was thus exposed to me. "At last, I have you!" I exclaimed; "you cannot

escape me now; from here I can see all that passes—your goings, your comings, your arts and snares. You will not suspect this invisible eye—this watchful eye, which will surprise crime at the moment it blooms. Oh, Justice, Justice! She marches slowly; but she arrives."

Nothing could be more sinister than the den now spread out before me—a great courtyard, the large slabs of which were covered with moss; in one corner, a well, whose stagnant waters you shuddered to look upon; a stairway covered with old shells; at the farther end a gallery, with wooden balustrade, and hanging upon it some old linen and the tick of an old straw mattress; on the first floor, to the left, the stone covering of a common sewer indicated the kitchen; to the right the lofty windows of the building looked out upon the street; then a few pots of dried, withered flowers—all was cracked, somber, moist. Only one or two hours during the day could the sun penetrate this loathsome spot; after that, the shadows took possession; then the sunshine fell upon the crazy walls, the worm-eaten balcony, the dull and tarnished glass, and upon the whirlwind of atoms floating in its golden rays, disturbed by no breath of air.

I had scarcely finished these observations and reflections, when the old woman entered, having just returned from market. I heard the grating of her heavy door. Then she appeared with her basket. She seemed fatigued—almost out of breath. The lace of her bonnet fell to her nose. With one hand she grasped the banister and ascended the stairs.

The heat was intolerable, suffocating; it was precisely one of those days in which all insects—crickets, spiders, mosquitoes, etc.—make old ruins resound with their strange sounds.

Fledermausse crossed the gallery slowly, like an old ferret who feels at home. She remained more than a quarter of an hour in the kitchen, then returned, spread out her linen, took the broom, and brushed away some blades of straw on the floor. At last she raised her head, and turned

her little green eyes in every direction, searching, investigating carefully.

Could she, by some strange intuition, suspect anything? I do not know; but I gently lowered the slate, and gave up my watch for the day.

In the morning Fledermausse appeared reassured. One angle of light fell upon the gallery. In passing, she caught a fly on the wing, and presented it delicately to a spider established in a corner of the roof. This spider was so bloated that, notwithstanding the distance, I saw it descend from round to round, then glide along a fine web, like a drop of venom, seize its prey from the hands of the old shrew, and remount rapidly. Fledermausse looked at it very attentively, with her eyes half closed; then sneezed, and said to herself, in a jeering tone, "God bless you, beautiful one; God bless you!"

I watched during six weeks, and could discover nothing concerning the power of Fledermausse. Sometimes, seated upon a stool, she peeled her potatoes, then hung out her linen upon the balustrade.

Sometimes I saw her spinning; but she never sang, as good, kind old women are accustomed to do, their trembling voices mingling well with the humming of the wheel.

Profound silence always reigned around her; she had no cat—that cherished society of old women—not even a sparrow came to rest under her roof. It seemed as if all animated nature shrank from her glance. The bloated spider alone took delight in her society.

I cannot now conceive how my patience could endure those long hours of observation: nothing escaped me; nothing was matter of indifference. At the slightest sound I raised my slate; my curiosity was without limit, insatiable.

Toubac complained greatly.

"Master Christian," said he, "how in the devil do you pass your time? Formerly you painted something for me every week; now you do not finish a piece once a month. Oh, you painters! 'Lazy as a painter' is a good, wise proverb. As soon as you have a few kreutzers in pos-

session, you put your hands in your pockets and go to sleep!"

I confess that I began to lose courage—I had watched, spied, and discovered nothing. I said to myself that the old woman could not be so dangerous as I had supposed; that I had perhaps done her injustice by my suspicions; in short, I began to make excuses for her. One lovely afternoon, with my eye fixed at my post of observation, I abandoned myself to these benevolent reflections, when suddenly the scene changed: Fledermausse passed through the gallery with the rapidity of lightning. She was no longer the same person; she was erect, her jaws were clinched, her glance fixed, her neck extended; she walked with grand strides, her gray locks floating behind her.

"Oh, at last," I said to myself, "something is coming, attention!" But, alas! the shadows of evening descended upon the old building, the noises of the city expired, and silence prevailed.

Fatigued and disappointed, I lay down upon my bed, when, casting my eyes toward my dormer window, I saw the room opposite illuminated. So! a traveler occupied the Green Room—fatal to strangers.

Now, all my fears were reawakened; the agitation of Fledermausse was explained—she scented a new victim.

No sleep for me that night; the rustling of the straw, the nibbling of the mice under the floor, gave me nervous chills.

I rose and leaned out of my window; I listened. The light in the room opposite was extinguished. In one of those moments of poignant anxiety, I cannot say if it was illusion or reality, I thought I saw the old wretch also watching and listening.

The night passed, and the gray dawn came to my windows; by degrees the noise and movements in the street ascended to my loft. Harassed by fatigue and emotion I fell asleep, but my slumber was short, and by eight o'clock I had resumed my post of observation.

It seemed as if the night had been as disturbed and tempestuous to Fledermausse as to myself. When she opened the door of the gallery, I saw that a livid pallor covered her cheeks and thin throat; she had on only her chemise and a woolen skirt; a few locks of reddish gray hair fell on her shoulders. She looked toward my hiding place with a dreamy, abstracted air, but she saw nothing; she was thinking of other things.

Suddenly she descended, leaving her old shoes at the bottom of the steps. "Without doubt," thought I, "she is going to see if the door below is well fastened."

I saw her remount hastily, springing up three or four steps at a time—it was terrible.

She rushed into the neighboring chamber, and I heard something like the falling of the top of a great chest; then Fledermausse appeared in the gallery, dragging a manikin after her, and this manikin was clothed like the Heidelberg student.

With surprising dexterity the old woman suspended this hideous object to a beam of the shed, then descended rapidly to the courtyard to contemplate it. A burst of sardonic laughter escaped from her lips; she remounted, then descended again like a maniac, and each time uttered new cries and new bursts of laughter.

A noise was heard near the door, and the old woman bounded forward, unhooked the manikin and carried it off; then, leaning over the balustrade with her throat elongated, her eyes flashing, she listened earnestly. The noise was lost in the distance, the muscles of her face relaxed, and she drew long breaths. It was only a carriage which had passed.

The old wretch had been frightened.

She now returned to the room, and I heard the chest close. This strange scene confounded all my ideas. What did this manikin signify? I became more than ever attentive.

Fledermausse now left the house with her basket on her arm. I followed her with my eyes till she turned the corner

of the street. She had reassumed the air of a trembling old woman, took short steps, and from time to time turned her head partly around, to peer behind from the corner of her eye.

Fledermausse was absent fully five hours. For myself, I went, I came, I meditated. The time seemed insupportable. The sun heated the slate of the roof, and scorched my brain.

Now I saw, at the window, the good man who occupied the fatal Green Chamber; he was a brave peasant of Nassau, with a large three-cornered hat, a scarlet vest, and a laughing face; he smoked his pipe of Ulm tranquillity, and seemed to fear no evil.

I felt a strong desire to cry out to him: "Good man, be on your guard! Do not allow yourself to be entrapped by the old wretch; distrust yourself!" but he would not have comprehended me. Toward two o'clock Fledermausse returned. The noise of her door resounded through the vestibule. Then alone, all alone, she entered the yard, and seated herself on the interior step of the stairway; she put down her basket before her, and drew out first some packets of herbs, then vegetables, then a red vest, then a three-cornered hat, a coat of brown velvet, pants of plush, and coarse woolen hose—the complete costume of the peasant from Nassau.

For a moment I felt stunned; then flames passed before my eyes.

I recollected those precipices which entice with an irresistible power; those wells or pits, which the police have been compelled to close, because men threw themselves into them; those trees which had been cut down because they inspired men with the idea of hanging themselves; that contagion of suicides, of robberies, of murders, at certain epochs, by desperate means; that strange and subtile enticement of example, which makes you yawn because another yawns, suffer because you see another suffer, kill yourself because you see others kill themselves—and my hair stood up with horror.

How could this Fledermausse, this base, sordid creature, have derived so profound a law of human nature? how had she found the means to use this law to the profit or indulgence of her sanguinary instincts? This I could not comprehend; it surpassed my wildest imaginations.

But reflecting longer upon this inexplicable mystery, I resolved to turn the fatal law against her, and to draw the old murderess into her own net.

So many innocent victims called out for vengeance!

I felt myself to be on the right path.

I went to all the old-clothes sellers in Nuremberg, and returned in the afternoon to the Inn Bœuf-Gras, with an enormous packet under my arm.

Nichel Schmidt had known me for a long time; his wife was fat and good-looking; I had painted her portrait.

"Ah, Master Christian," said he, squeezing my hand, "what happy circumstance brings you here? What procures me the pleasure of seeing you?"

"My dear Monsieur Schmidt, I feel a vehement, insatiable desire to sleep in the Green Room."

We were standing on the threshold of the inn, and I pointed to the room. The good man looked at me distrustfully.

"Fear nothing," I said; "I have no desire to hang myself."

"*À la bonne heure! à la bonne heure!* For frankly that would give me pain; an artist of such merit! When do you wish the room, Master Christian?"

"This evening."

"Impossible! it is occupied!"

"Monsieur can enter immediately," said a voice just behind me, "I will not be in the way."

We turned around in great surprise; the peasant of Nassau stood before us, with his three-cornered hat, and his packet at the end of his walking stick. He had just learned the history of his three predecessors in the Green Room, and was trembling with rage.

"Rooms like yours!" cried he, stuttering; "but it is

murderous to put people there—it is assassination! You deserve to be sent to the galleys immediately!"

"Go—go—calm yourself," said the innkeeper; "that did not prevent you from sleeping well."

"Happily, I said my prayers at night," said the peasant; "without that, where would I be?" and he withdrew, with his hands raised to heaven.

"Well," said Nichel Schmidt, stupefied, "the room is vacant, but I entreat you, do not serve me a bad trick."

"It would be a worse trick for myself than for you, monsieur."

I gave my packet to the servants, and installed myself for the time with the drinkers. For a long time I had not felt so calm and happy. After so many doubts and disquietudes, I touched the goal. The horizon seemed to clear up, and it appeared that some invisible power gave me the hand. I lighted my pipe, placed my elbow on the table, my wine before me, and listened to the chorus in "Freischütz," played by a troupe of gypsies from the Black Forest. The trumpets, the hue and cry of the chase, the hautboys, plunged me into a vague reverie, and, at times rousing up to look at the hour, I asked myself gravely, if all which *had* happened to me was not a dream. But the watchman came to ask us to leave the *salle*, and soon other and more solemn thoughts were surging in my soul, and in deep meditation I followed little Charlotte, who preceded me with a candle to my room.

We mounted the stairs to the third story. Charlotte gave me the candle and pointed to the door.

"There," said she, and descended rapidly.

I opened the door. The Green Room was like any other inn room. The ceiling was very low, the bed very high. With one glance I explored the interior, and then glided to the window.

Nothing was to be seen in the house of Fledermausse; only, in some distant room, an obscure light was burning. Some one was on the watch. "That is well," said I, closing the curtain. "I have all necessary time."

I opened my packet, I put on a woman's bonnet with hanging lace; then, placing myself before a mirror, I took a brush and painted wrinkles in my face. This took me nearly an hour. Then I put on the dress and a large shawl, and I was actually afraid of myself. Fledermausse seemed to me to look at me from the mirror.

At this moment the watchman cried out, "Eleven o'clock!" I seized the manikin which I had brought in my packet, and muffled it in a costume precisely similar to that worn by the old wretch. I then opened the curtain.

Certainly, after all that I had seen of the Fledermausse, of her infernal cunning, her prudence, her adroitness, she could not in any way surprise me; and yet I was afraid. The light which I had remarked in the chamber was still immovable, and now cast its yellow rays on the manikin of the peasant of Nassau, which was crouched on the corner of the bed, with the head hanging on the breast, the three-cornered hat pulled down over the face, the arms suspended, and the whole aspect that of absolute despair.

The shadows, managed with diabolical art, allowed nothing to be seen but the general effect of the face. The red vest, and six round buttons alone, seemed to shine out in the darkness. But the silence of the night, the complete immobility of the figure, the exhausted, mournful air, were well calculated to take possession of a spectator with a strange power. For myself, although forewarned, I was chilled even to my bones.

How would it, then, have fared with the poor, simple peasant, if he had been surprised unawares? He would have been utterly cast down. Despairing, he would have lost all power of self-control, and the spirit of imitation would have done the rest.

Scarcely had I moved the curtain, when I saw Fledermausse on the watch behind her window. She could not see me. I opened my window softly; the window opposite was opened! Then her manikin appeared to rise slowly and advance before me. I, also, advanced my manikin,

and seizing my torch with one hand, with the other I quickly opened the shutters. And now the old woman and myself were face to face. Struck with sudden terror, she had let her manikin fall!

We gazed at each other with almost equal horror. *She* extended her finger—I advanced *mine*. *She* moved her lips—I agitated *mine*. She breathed a profound sigh, and leaned upon her elbow. I imitated her.

To describe all the terrors of this scene would be impossible. It bordered upon confusion, madness, delirium. It was a death struggle between two wills; between two intelligences; between two souls—each one wishing to destroy the other; and, in this struggle, I had the advantage —her victims struggled with me.

After having imitated for some seconds every movement of Fledermausse, I pulled a rope from under my skirt, and attached it to the crossbeam.

The old woman gazed at me with gaping mouth. I passed the rope around my neck; her pupils expanded, lightened; her face was convulsed.

"No, no!" said she, in a whistling voice.

I pursued her with the impassability of an executioner.

Then rage seemed to take possession of her.

"Old fool!" she exclaimed, straightening herself up, and her hands contracted on the crossbeam. "Old fool!" I gave her no time to go on blowing out my lamp. I stooped, like a man going to make a vigorous spring, and, seizing my manikin, I passed the rope around its neck, and precipitated it below.

A terrible cry resounded through the street, and then silence, which I seemed to feel. Perspiration bathed my forehead. I listened a long time. At the end of a quarter of an hour I heard, far away, very far away, the voice of the watchman, crying, "Inhabitants of Nuremberg, midnight, midnight sounds!"

"Now justice is satisfied!" I cried, "and three victims are avenged. Pardon me, O Lord!"

About five minutes after the cry of the watchman, I saw

Fledermausse attracted, allured by my manikin (her exact image), spring from the window, with a rope around her neck, and rest suspended from the crossbeam.

I saw the shadow of death undulating through her body, while the moon, calm, silent, majestic, inundated the summit of the roof, and her cold, pale rays reposed upon the old, disheveled, hideous head.

Just as I had seen the poor young student of Heidelberg, just so did I now see Fledermausse.

In the morning, all Nuremberg learned that the old wretch had hanged herself, and this was the last event of that kind in the Street Minnesänger.

The Waters of Death

The warm mineral waters of Spinbronn, situated in the Hundsrück, several leagues from Pirmesens, formerly enjoyed a magnificent reputation. All who were afflicted with gout or gravel in Germany repaired thither; the savage aspect of the country did not deter them. They lodged in pretty cottages at the head of the defile; they bathed in the cascade, which fell in large sheets of foam from the summit of the rocks; they drank one or two decanters of mineral water daily, and the doctor of the place, Daniel Hâselnoss, who distributed his prescriptions clad in a great wig and chestnut coat, had an excellent practice.

To-day the waters of Spinbronn figure no longer in the "Codex";[1] in this poor village one no longer sees anyone but a few miserable woodcutters, and, sad to say, Dr. Hâselnoss has left!

All this resulted from a series of very strange catastrophes which lawyer Brêmer of Pirmesens told me about the other day.

[1] A collection of prescriptions indorsed by the Faculty of Paris.—*Trans.*

You should know, Master Frantz (said he), that the spring of Spinbronn issues from a sort of cavern, about five feet high and twelve or fifteen feet wide; the water has a warmth of sixty-seven degrees Centigrade; it is salt. As for the cavern, entirely covered without with moss, ivy, and brushwood, its depth is unknown because the hot exhalations prevent all entrance.

Nevertheless, strangely enough, it was noticed early in the last century that birds of the neighborhood—thrushes, doves, hawks—were engulfed in it in full flight, and it was never known to what mysterious influence to attribute this particular.

In 1801, at the height of the season, owing to some circumstance which is still unexplained, the spring became more abundant, and the bathers, walking below on the greensward, saw a human skeleton as white as snow fall from the cascade.

You may judge, Master Frantz, of the general fright; it was thought naturally that a murder had been committed at Spinbronn in a recent year, and that the body of the victim had been thrown in the spring. But the skeleton weighed no more than a dozen francs, and Hâselnoss concluded that it must have sojourned more than three centuries in the sand to have become reduced to such a state of desiccation.

This very plausible reasoning did not prevent a crowd of patrons, wild at the idea of having drunk the saline water, from leaving before the end of the day; those worst afflicted with gout and gravel consoled themselves. But the overflow continuing, all the rubbish, slime, and detritus which the cavern contained was disgorged on the following days; a veritable bone-yard came down from the mountain: skeletons of animals of every kind—of quadrupeds, birds, and reptiles—in short, all that one could conceive as most horrible.

Hâselnoss issued a pamphlet demonstrating that all these bones were derived from an antediluvian world: that they were fossil bones, accumulated there in a sort of funnel

during the universal flood—that is to say, four thousand years before Christ, and that, consequently, one might consider them as nothing but stones, and that it was needless to be disgusted. But his work had scarcely reassured the gouty when, one fine morning, the corpse of a fox, then that of a hawk with all its feathers, fell from the cascade.

It was impossible to establish that these remains antedated the Flood. Anyway, the disgust was so great that everybody tied up his bundle and went to take the waters elsewhere.

"How infamous!" cried the beautiful ladies—"how horrible! So that's what the virtue of these mineral waters came from! Oh, 'twere better to die of gravel than continue such a remedy!"

At the end of a week there remained at Spinbronn only a big Englishman who had gout in his hands as well as in his feet, who had himself addressed as Sir Thomas Hawerburch, Commodore; and he brought a large retinue, according to the usage of a British subject in a foreign land.

This personage, big and fat, with a florid complexion, but with hands simply knotted with gout, would have drunk skeleton soup if it would have cured his infirmity. He laughed heartily over the desertion of the other sufferers, and installed himself in the prettiest *châlet* at half price, announcing his design to pass the winter at Spinbronn.

(Here lawyer Brêmer slowly absorbed an ample pinch of snuff as if to quicken his reminiscences; he shook his laced ruff with his finger tips and continued:)

Five or six years before the Revolution of 1789, a young doctor of Pirmesens, named Christian Weber, had gone out to San Domingo in the hope of making his fortune. He had actually amassed some hundred thousand francs in the exercise of his profession when the negro revolt broke out.

I need not recall to you the barbarous treatment to which our unfortunate fellow countrymen were subjected at Haiti.

Dr. Weber had the good luck to escape the massacre and to save part of his fortune. Then he traveled in South America, and especially in French Guiana. In 1801 he returned to Pirmesens, and established himself at Spinbronn, where Dr. Hâselnoss made over his house and defunct practice.

Christian Weber brought with him an old negress called Agatha: a frightful creature, with a flat nose and lips as large as your fist, and her head tied up in three bandanas of razor-edged colors. This poor old woman adored red; she had earrings which hung down to her shoulders, and the mountaineers of Hundsrück came from six leagues around to stare at her.

As for Dr. Weber, he was a tall, lean man, invariably dressed in a sky-blue coat with codfish tails and deerskin breeches. He wore a hat of flexible straw and boots with bright yellow tops, on the front of which hung two silver tassels. He talked little; his laugh was like a nervous attack, and his gray eyes, usually calm and meditative, shone with singular brilliance at the least sign of contradiction. Every morning he fetched a turn round about the mountain, letting his horse ramble at a venture, whistling forever the same tune, some negro melody or other. Lastly, this rum chap had brought from Haiti a lot of bandboxes filled with queer insects—some black and reddish brown, big as eggs; others little and shimmering like sparks. He seemed to set greater store by them than by his patients, and, from time to time, on coming back from his rides, he brought a quantity of butterflies pinned to his hat brim.

Scarcely was he settled in Hâselnoss's vast house when he peopled the back yard with outlandish birds—Barbary geese with scarlet cheeks, Guinea hens, and a white peacock, which perched habitually on the garden wall, and which divided with the negress the admiration of the mountaineers.

If I enter into these details, Master Frantz, it's because they recall my early youth; Dr. Christian found himself to

be at the same time my cousin and my tutor, and as early as on his return to Germany he had come to take me and install me in his house at Spinbronn. The black Agatha at first sight inspired me with some fright, and I only got seasoned to that fantastic visage with considerable difficulty; but she was such a good woman—she knew so well how to make spiced patties, she hummed such strange songs in a guttural voice, snapping her fingers and keeping time with a heavy shuffle, that I ended by taking her in fast friendship.

Dr. Weber was naturally thick with Sir Thomas Hawerburch, as representing the only one of his clientele then in evidence, and I was not slow in perceiving that these two eccentrics held long conventicles together. They conversed on mysterious matters, on the transmission of fluids, and indulged in certain odd signs which one or the other had picked up in his voyages—Sir Thomas in the Orient, and my tutor in America. This puzzled me greatly. As children will, I was always lying in wait for what they seemed to want to conceal from me; but despairing in the end of discovering anything, I took the course of questioning Agatha, and the poor old woman, after making me promise to say nothing about it, admitted that my tutor was a sorcerer.

For the rest, Dr. Weber exercised a singular influence over the mind of this negress, and this woman, habitually so gay and forever ready to be amused by nothing, trembled like a leaf when her master's gray eyes chanced to alight on her.

All this, Master Frantz, seems to have no bearing on the springs of Spinbronn. But wait, wait—you shall see by what a singular concourse of circumstances my story is connected with it.

I told you that birds darted into the cavern, and even other and larger creatures. After the final departure of the patrons, some of the old inhabitants of the village recalled that a young girl named Louise Müller, who lived with her infirm old grandmother in a cottage on the pitch of

the slope, had suddenly disappeared half a hundred years before. She had gone out to look for herbs in the forest, and there had never been any more news of her afterwards, except that, three or four days later, some woodcutters who were descending the mountain had found her sickle and her apron a few steps from the cavern.

From that moment it was evident to everyone that the skeleton which had fallen from the cascade, on the subject of which Hâselnoss had turned such fine phrases, was no other than that of Louise Müller. The poor girl had doubtless been drawn into the gulf by the mysterious influence which almost daily overcame weaker beings!

What could this influence be? None knew. But the inhabitants of Spinbronn, superstitious like all mountaineers, maintained that the devil lived in the cavern, and terror spread in the whole region.

Now one afternoon in the middle of the month of July, 1802, my cousin undertook a new classification of the insects in his bandboxes. He had secured several rather curious ones the preceding afternoon. I was with him, holding the lighted candle with one hand and with the other a needle which I heated red-hot.

Sir Thomas, seated, his chair tipped back against the sill of a window, his feet on a stool, watched us work, and smoked his cigar with a dreamy air.

I stood in with Sir Thomas Hawerburch, and I accompanied him every day to the woods in his carriage. He enjoyed hearing me chatter in English, and wished to make of me, as he said, a thorough gentleman.

The butterflies labeled, Dr. Weber at last opened the box of the largest insects, and said:

"Yesterday I secured a magnificent horn beetle, the great *Lucanus cervus* of the oaks of the Hartz. It has this peculiarity—the right claw divides in five branches. It's a rare specimen."

At the same time I offered him the needle, and as he pierced the insect before fixing it on the cork, Sir Thomas,

until then impassive, got up, and, drawing near a band-box, he began to examine the spider crab of Guiana with a feeling of horror which was strikingly portrayed on his fat vermilion face.

"That is certainly," he cried, "the most frightful work of the creation. The mere sight of it—it makes me shudder!"

In truth, a sudden pallor overspread his face.

"Bah!" said my tutor, "all that is only a prejudice from childhood—one hears his nurse cry out—one is afraid—and the impression sticks. But if you should consider the spider with a strong microscope, you would be astonished at the finish of his members, at their admirable arrangement, and even at their elegance."

"It disgusts me," interrupted the commodore brusquely. "Pouah!"

It had turned over in his fingers.

"Oh! I don't know why," he declared, "spiders have always frozen my blood!"

Dr. Weber began to laugh, and I, who shared the feelings of Sir Thomas, exclaimed:

"Yes, cousin, you ought to take this villainous beast out of the box—it is disgusting—it spoils all the rest."

"Little chump," he said, his eyes sparkling, "what makes you look at it? If you don't like it, go take yourself off somewhere."

Evidently he had taken offense; and Sir Thomas, who was then before the window contemplating the mountain, turned suddenly, took me by the hand, and said to me in a manner full of good will:

"Your tutor, Frantz, sets great store by his spider; we like the trees better—the verdure. Come, let's go for a walk."

"Yes, go," cried the doctor, "and come back for supper at six o'clock."

Then raising his voice:

"No hard feelings, Sir Hawerburch."

The commodore replied laughingly, and we got into

the carriage, which was always waiting in front of the door of the house.

Sir Thomas wanted to drive himself and dismissed his servant. He made me sit beside him on the same seat and we started off for Rothalps.

While the carriage was slowly ascending the sandy path, an invincible sadness possessed itself of my spirit. Sir Thomas, on his part, was grave. He perceived my sadness and said:

"You don't like spiders, Frantz, nor do I either. But thank Heaven, there aren't any dangerous ones in this country. The spider crab which your tutor has in his box comes from French Guiana. It inhabits the great, swampy forests filled with warm vapors, with scalding exhalations; this temperature is necessary to its life. Its web, or rather its vast snare, envelops an entire thicket. In it it takes birds as our spiders take flies. But drive these disgusting images from your mind, and drink a swallow of my old Burgundy."

Then turning, he raised the cover of the rear seat, and drew from the straw a sort of gourd from which he poured me a full bumper in a leather goblet.

When I had drunk all my good humor returned and I began to laugh at my fright.

The carriage was drawn by a little Ardennes horse, thin and nervous as a goat, which clambered up the nearly perpendicular path. Thousands of insects hummed in the bushes. At our right, at a hundred paces or more, the somber outskirts of the Rothalp forests extended below us, the profound shades of which, choked with briers and foul brush, showed here and there an opening filled with light. On our left tumbled the stream of Spinbronn, and the more we climbed the more did its silvered sheets, floating in the abyss, grow tinged with azure and redouble their sound of cymbals.

I was captivated by this spectacle. Sir Thomas, leaning back in the seat, his knees as high as his chin, abandoned himself to his habitual reveries, while the horse,

laboring with his feet and hanging his head on his chest as a counter-weight to the carriage, held on as if suspended on the flank of the rock. Soon, however, we reached a pitch less steep: the haunt of the roebuck, surrounded by tremulous shadows. I always lost my head, and my eyes too, in an immense perspective. At the apparition of the shadows I turned my head and saw the cavern of Spinbronn close at hand. The encompassing mists were a magnificent green, and the stream which, before falling, extends over a bed of black sand and pebbles, was so clear that one would have thought it frozen if pale vapors did not follow its surface.

The horse had just stopped of his own accord to breathe; Sir Thomas, rising, cast his eye over the countryside.

"How calm everything is!" said he.

Then, after an instant of silence:

"If you weren't here, Frantz, I should certainly bathe in the basin."

"But, Commodore," said I, "why not bathe? I would do well to stroll around in the neighborhood. On the next hill is a great glade filled with wild strawberries. I'll go and pick some. I'll be back in an hour."

"Ha! I should like to, Frantz; it's a good idea. Dr. Weber contends that I drink too much Burgundy. It's necessary to offset wine with mineral water. This little bed of sand pleases me."

Then, having set both feet on the ground, he hitched the horse to the trunk of a little birch and waved his hand as if to say:

"You may go."

I saw him sit down on the moss and draw off his boots. As I moved away he turned and called out:

"In an hour, Frantz."

They were his last words.

An hour later I returned to the spring. The horse, the carriage, and the clothes of Sir Thomas alone met my eyes. The sun was setting. The shadows were getting

long. Not a bird's song under the foliage, not the hum of an insect in the tall grass. A silence like death looked down on this solitude! The silence frightened me. I climbed up on the rock which overlooks the cavern; I looked to the right and to the left. Nobody! I called. No answer! The sound of my voice, repeated by the echoes, filled me with fear. Night settled down slowly. A vague sense of horror oppressed me. Suddenly the story of the young girl who had disappeared occurred to me; and I began to descend on the run; but, arriving before the cavern, I stopped, seized with unaccountable terror: in casting a glance in the deep shadows of the spring I had caught sight of two motionless red points. Then I saw long lines wavering in a strange manner in the midst of the darkness, and that at a depth where no human eye had ever penetrated. Fear lent my sight, and all my senses, an unheard-of subtlety of perception. For several seconds I heard very distinctly the evening plaint of a cricket down at the edge of the wood, a dog barking far away, very far in the valley. Then my heart, compressed for an instant by emotion, began to beat furiously and I no longer heard anything!

Then uttering a horrible cry, I fled, abandoning the horse, the carriage. In less than twenty minutes, bounding over the rocks and brush, I reached the threshold of our house, and cried in a stifled voice:

"Run! Run! Sir Hawerburch is dead! Sir Hawerburch is in the cavern——!"

After these words, spoken in the presence of my tutor, of the old woman Agatha, and of two or three people invited in that evening by the doctor, I fainted. I have learned since that during a whole hour I raved deliriously.

The whole village had gone in search of the commodore. Christian Weber hurried them off. At ten o'clock in the evening all the crowd came back, bringing the carriage, and in the carriage the clothes of Sir Hawerburch. They had discovered nothing. It was impossible to take ten steps in the cavern without being suffocated.

During their absence Agatha and I waited, sitting in the chimney corner. I, howling incoherent words of terror; she, with hands crossed on her knees, eyes wide open, going from time to time to the window to see what was taking place, for from the foot of the mountain one could see torches flitting in the woods. One could hear hoarse voices, in the distance, calling to each other in the night.

At the approach of her master, Agatha began to tremble. The doctor entered brusquely, pale, his lips compressed, despair written on his face. A score of woodcutters followed him tumultuously, in great felt hats with wide brims — swarthy visaged — shaking the ash from their torches. Scarcely was he in the hall when my tutor's glittering eyes seemed to look for something. He caught sight of the negress, and without a word having passed between them, the poor woman began to cry:

"No! no! I don't want to!"

"And I wish it," replied the doctor in a hard tone.

One would have said that the negress had been seized by an invincible power. She shuddered from head to foot, and Christian Weber showing her a bench, she sat down with a corpse-like stiffness.

All the bystanders, witnesses of this shocking spectacle, good folk with primitive and crude manners, but full of pious sentiments, made the sign of the cross, and I who knew not then, even by name, of the terrible magnetic power of the will, began to tremble, believing that Agatha was dead.

Christian Weber approached the negress, and making a rapid pass over her forehead:

"Are you there?" said he.

"Yes, master."

"Sir Thomas Hawerburch?"

At these words she shuddered again.

"Do you see him?"

"Yes—yes," she gasped in a strangling voice, "I see him."

"Where is he?"

"Up there—in the back of the cavern—dead!"

"Dead!" said the doctor, "how?"

"The spider— Oh! the spider crab— Oh!——"

"Control your agitation," said the doctor, who was quite pale, "tell us plainly——"

"The spider crab holds him by the throat—he is there—at the back—under the rock—wound round by webs—Ah!"

Christian Weber cast a cold glance toward his assistants, who, crowding around, with their eyes sticking out of their heads, were listening intently, and I heard him murmur:

"It's horrible! horrible!"

Then he resumed:

"You see him?"

"I see him——"

"And the spider—is it big?"

"Oh, master, never—never have I seen such a large one—not even on the banks of the Mocaris—nor in the lowlands of Konanama. It is as large as my head——!"

There was a long silence. All the assistants looked at each other, their faces livid, their hair standing up. Christian Weber alone seemed calm; having passed his hand several times over the negress's forehead, he continued:

"Agatha, tell us how death befell Sir Hawerburch."

"He was bathing in the basin of the spring—the spider saw him from behind, with his bare back. It was hungry, it had fasted for a long time; it saw him with his arms on the water. Suddenly it came out like a flash and placed its fangs around the commodore's neck, and he cried out: 'Oh! oh! my God!' It stung and fled. Sir Hawerburch sank down in the water and died. Then the spider returned and surrounded him with its web, and he floated gently, gently, to the back of the cavern. It drew in on the web. Now he is all black."

The doctor, turning to me, who no longer felt the shock, asked:

"Is it true, Frantz, that the commodore went in bathing?"

"Yes, Cousin Christian."

"At what time?"

"At four o'clock."

"At four o'clock—it was very warm, wasn't it?"

"Oh, yes!"

"It's certainly so," said he, striking his forehead. "The monster could come out without fear——"

He pronounced a few unintelligible words, and then, looking toward the mountaineers:

"My friends," he cried, "that is where this mass of débris came from—of skeletons—which spread terror among the bathers. That is what has ruined you all—it is the spider crab! It is there—hidden in its web—awaiting its prey in the back of the cavern! Who can tell the number of its victims?"

And full of fury, he led the way, shouting:

"Fagots! Fagots!"

The woodcutters followed him, vociferating.

Ten minutes later two large wagons laden with fagots were slowly mounting the slope. A long file of woodcutters, their backs bent double, followed, enveloped in the somber night. My tutor and I walked ahead, leading the horses by their bridles, and the melancholy moon vaguely lighted this funereal march. From time to time the wheels grated. Then the carts, raised by the irregularities of the rocky road, fell again in the track with a heavy jolt.

As we drew near the cavern, on the playground of the roebucks, our cortége halted. The torches were lit, and the crowd advanced toward the gulf. The limpid water, running over the sand, reflected the bluish flame of the resinous torches, the rays of which revealed the tops of the black firs leaning over the rock.

"This is the place to unload," the doctor then said. "It's necessary to block up the mouth of the cavern."

And it was not without a feeling of terror that each undertook the duty of executing his orders. The fagots

fell from the top of the loads. A few stakes driven down before the opening of the spring prevented the water from carrying them away.

Toward midnight the mouth of the cavern was completely closed. The water running over spread to both sides on the moss. The top fagots were perfectly dry; then Dr. Weber, supplying himself with a torch, himself lit the fire. The flames ran from twig to twig with an angry crackling, and soon leaped toward the sky, chasing clouds of smoke before them.

It was a strange and savage spectacle, the great pile with trembling shadows lit up in this way.

This cavern poured forth black smoke, unceasingly renewed and disgorged. All around stood the woodcutters, somber, motionless, expectant, their eyes fixed on the opening; and I, although trembling from head to foot in fear, could not tear away my gaze.

It was a good quarter of an hour that we waited, and Dr. Weber was beginning to grow impatient, when a black object, with long hooked claws, appeared suddenly in the shadow and precipitated itself toward the opening.

A cry resounded about the pyre.

The spider, driven back by the live coals, reëntered its cave. Then, smothered doubtless by the smoke, it returned to the charge and leaped out into the midst of the flames. Its long legs curled up. It was as large as my head, and of a violet red.

One of the woodcutters, fearing lest it leap clear of the fire, threw his hatchet at it, and with such good aim that on the instant the fire around it was covered with blood. But soon the flames burst out more vigorously over it and consumed the horrible destroyer.

Such, Master Frantz, was the strange event which destroyed the fine reputation which the waters of Spinbronn formerly enjoyed. I can certify the scrupulous precision of my account. But as for giving you an explanation, that would be impossible for me to do. At the same time,

allow me to tell you that it does not seem to me absurd to admit that a spider, under the influence of a temperature raised by thermal waters, which affords the same conditions of life and development as the scorching climates of Africa and South America, should attain a fabulous size. It was this same extreme heat which explains the prodigious exuberance of the antediluvian creation!

However that may be, my tutor, judging that it would be impossible after this event to reëstablish the waters of Spinbronn, sold the house back to Hâselnoss, in order to return to America with his negress and collections. I was sent to board in Strasbourg, where I remained until 1809.

The great political events of the epoch then absorbing the attention of Germany and France explain why the affair I have just told you about passed completely unobserved.

Erckmann-Chatrian

The Man-Wolf

I

ABOUT Christmas time of the year 18—, as I was lying fast asleep at the Cygne at Fribourg, my old friend Gideon Sperver broke abruptly into my room, crying:

"Fritz, I have good news for you; I am going to take you to Nideck, two leagues from this place. You know Nideck, the finest baronial castle in the country, a grand monument of the glory of our forefathers?"

Now I had not seen Sperver, who was my foster-father, for sixteen years; he had grown a full beard in that time, a huge fox-skin cap covered his head, and he was holding his lantern close under my nose. It was, therefore, only natural that I should answer:

"In the first place, let us do things in order. Tell me who you are."

"Who I am? What! don't you remember Gideon Sperver, the Schwartzwald huntsman? You would not be so ungrateful, would you? Was it not I who taught you to set a trap, to lay wait for the foxes along the skirts of the woods, to start the dogs after the wild birds? Do you remember me now? Look at my left ear, with a frost-bite."

"Now I know you; that left ear of yours has done it. Shake hands."

Sperver, passing the back of his hand across his eyes, went on:

"You know Nideck?"

"Of course I do—by reputation; what have you to do there?"

"I am the count's chief huntsman."

"And who has sent you?"

"The young Countess Odile."

"Very good. How soon are we to start?"

"This moment. The matter is urgent; the old count is very ill, and his daughter has begged me not to lose a moment. The horses are quite ready."

"But, Gideon, my dear fellow, just look out at the weather; it has been snowing three days without cessation."

"Oh, nonsense; we are not going out boar-hunting. Put on your thick coat, buckle on your spurs, and let us prepare to start. I will order something to eat first." And he went out, first adding: "Be sure to put on your cape."

I could never refuse old Gideon anything; from my childhood he could do anything with me with a nod or a sign; so I equipped myself and came into the coffee-room.

"I knew," he said, "that you would not let me go back without you. Eat every bite of this slice of ham, and let us drink a stirrup cup, for the horses are getting impatient. I have had your portmanteau put in."

"My portmanteau! What is that for?"

"Yes, it will be all right; you will have to stay a few days at Nideck, that is indispensable, and I will tell you why presently."

So we went down into the courtyard.

At that moment two horsemen arrived, evidently tired out with riding, their horses in a perfect lather of foam. Sperver, who had always been a great admirer of a fine horse, expressed his surprise and admiration at these splendid animals.

"What beauties! They are of the Wallachian breed, I can see, as finely formed as deer, and as swift. Nicholas, throw a cloth over them quickly, or they will take cold."

The travelers, muffled in Siberian furs, passed close by us just as we were going to mount. I could only discern the long brown mustache of one, and his singular bright and sparkling eyes.

They entered the hotel.

The groom was holding our horses by the bridle. He wished us *bon voyage*, removed his hand, and we were off.

Sperver rode a pure Mecklenburg. I was mounted on a stout cob, bred in the Ardennes, full of fire; we flew over the snowy ground. In ten minutes we had left Fribourg behind us.

The sky was beginning to clear up. As far as the eye could reach we could distinguish neither road, path, nor track. Our only company were the ravens of the Black Forest, spreading their hollow wings wide over the banks of snow, trying one place after another unsuccessfully for food, and croaking, "Misery! misery!"

Gideon, with his weather-beaten countenance, his fur cloak and cap, galloped on ahead, whistling airs from the *Freischütz*; sometimes, as he turned, I could see the sparkling drops of moisture hanging from his long mustache.

"Well, Fritz, my boy, this is a fine winter's morning."

"So it is, but it is rather severe; don't you think so?"

"I am fond of a clear hard frost," he replied; "it promotes circulation. If our old minister Tobias had but the courage to start out in weather like this he would soon put an end to his rheumatic pains."

I smiled, I am afraid, involuntarily.

After an hour of this rapid pace Sperver slackened his speed and let me come abreast of him.

"Fritz, I shall have to tell you the object of this journey at some time, I suppose?"

"I was beginning to think I ought to know what I am going about."

"A good many doctors have already been consulted."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, some came from Berlin in great wigs, who only asked to see the patient's tongue. Others from Switzerland examined him another way. The doctors from Paris stared at their patient through magnifying-glasses, to learn something from his physiognomy. But all their learning was wasted, and they got large fees in reward of their ignorance."

"Is that the way you speak of us medical gentlemen?"

"I am not alluding to you at all. I have too much respect for you, and if I should happen to break my leg, I don't know that there is another that I should prefer to yourself to treat me as a patient, but you have not discovered an optical instrument yet to tell what is going on inside of us."

"How do you know that?"

At this reply the worthy fellow looked at me doubtfully, as if he thought me a quack like the rest, yet he replied:

"Well, Fritz, if you have indeed such a glass it will be wanted now, for the count's complaint is internal; it is a terrible kind of illness, something like madness. You know that madness shows itself in either nine hours, nine days, or nine weeks?"

"So it is said; but not having noticed this myself, I cannot say that it is so."

"Still you know that there are agues which return at periods of either three, six, or nine years. There are singular works in this machinery of ours. Whenever this human clockwork is wound up in some particular way, fever, or indigestion, or toothache, returns at the very hour and day."

"Why, Gideon, I am quite aware of that; those periodical complaints are the greatest trouble we have."

"I am sorry to hear it, for the count's complaint is periodical; it comes back every year, on the same day, at the same hour; his mouth runs over with foam, his eyes stand out white and staring, like great billiard balls; he shakes from head to foot, and he gnashes with his teeth."

"Perhaps this man has had serious troubles to go through?"

"No, he has not. If his daughter would but consent to be married he would be the happiest man alive. He is rich and powerful, and full of honours. He possesses everything that the rest of the world is coveting. Unfortunately his daughter persists in refusing any offer of marriage. She consecrates her life to God, and it harasses

him to think that the ancient house of Nideck will become extinct."

"How did his illness come on?" I asked.

"Suddenly, ten years ago," was the reply.

All at once the honest fellow seemed to be recollecting himself. He took from his pocket a short pipe, filled it, and having lighted it—

"One evening," said he, "I was sitting alone with the count in the armoury of the castle. It was about Christmas time. We had been hunting wild boars the whole day in the valleys of the Rhétal, and had returned at night bringing home with us two of our boar-hounds ripped open from head to tail. It was just as cold as it is to-night, with snow and frost. The count was pacing up and down the room with his chin upon his breast and his hands crossed behind him, like a man in profound thought. From time to time he stopped to watch the gathering snow on the high windows, and I was warming myself in the chimney corner, bewailing my dead hounds, and bestowing maledictions on all the wild boars that infest the Schwartzwald. Everybody at Nideck had been asleep a couple of hours, and not a sound could be heard but the tread and the clank of the count's heavy spurred boots upon the flags. I remember well that a crow, no doubt driven by a gust of wind, came flapping its wings against the window-panes, uttering a discordant shriek, and how the sheets of snow fell from the windows, and the windows suddenly changed from white to black——"

"But what has all this to do with your master's illness?" I interrupted.

"Let me go on—you will soon see. At that cry the count suddenly gathered himself together with a shuddering movement, his eyes became fixed with a glassy stare, his cheeks were bloodless, and he bent his head forward just like a hunter catching the sound of his approaching game. I went on warming myself, and I thought, 'Won't he soon go to bed now?' for, to tell you the truth, I was overcome with fatigue. All these details, Fritz, are still present in my

memory. Scarcely had the bird of ill-omen croaked its unearthly cry when the old clock struck eleven. At that moment the count turns on his heel—he listens, his lips tremble, I can see him staggering like a drunken man. He stretches out his hands, his jaws are tightly clenched, his eyes staring and white. I cried, 'My lord, what is the matter?' but he began to laugh discordantly like a madman, stumbled, and fell upon the stone floor, face downwards. I called for help; servants came round. Sébalt took the count by the shoulders; we removed him to bed near the window; but just as I was loosening the count's neckerchief —for I was afraid it was apoplexy—the countess came and flung herself upon the body of her father, uttering such heartrending cries that the very remembrance of them makes me shudder."

Here Gideon took his pipe from his lips, knocked the ashes out upon the pommel of his saddle, and pursued his tale in a saddened voice.

"From that day, Fritz, none but evil days have come upon Nideck, and better times seem to be far off. Every year at the same day and hour the count has shuddering fits. The malady lasts from a week to a fortnight, during which he howls and yells so frightfully that it makes a man's blood run cold to hear him. Then he slowly recovers his usual health. He is still pale and weak, and moves trembling from one chair to another, starting at the least noise or movement, and fearful of his own shadow. The young countess, the sweetest creature in the world, never leaves his side; but he cannot endure her while the fit is upon him. He roars at her, 'Go leave me this moment! I have enough to endure without seeing you hanging about me!' It is a horrible sight. I am always close at his heels in the chase, I who sound the horn when he has killed the forest beasts; I am at the head of all his retainers, and I would give my life for his sake; yet when he is at his worst I can hardly keep my hands from his throat, I am so horrified at the way in which he treats his beautiful daughter."

Sperver looked dangerously wroth for a moment, clapped both his spurs to his mount, and we rode on at a hard gallop.

I had fallen into a reverie. The cure of a complaint of this description appeared to me more than doubtful, even impossible. It was evidently a mental disorder. To fight against it with any hope of success it would be needful to trace it back to its origin, and this would, no doubt, be too remote for successful investigation.

All these reflections perplexed me greatly. The old huntsman's story, far from strengthening my hopes, only depressed me—not a very favorable condition to insure success. At about three we came in sight of the ancient castle of Nideck on the verge of the horizon. In spite of the great distance we could distinguish the projecting turrets, apparently suspended from the angles of the edifice. It was but a dim outline, barely distinguishable from the blue sky, but soon the red points of the Vosges became visible.

At that moment Sperver drew in his bridle and said:

"Fritz, we shall have to get there before night—onward!"

But it was in vain that he spurred and lashed. The horse stood rooted to the ground, his ears thrown back, his nostrils dilated, his sides panting, his legs firmly planted in an attitude of resistance.

"What is the matter with the beast?" cried Gideon in astonishment. "Do you see anything, Fritz? Surely——"

He broke off abruptly, pointing with his whip at a dark form in the snow fifty yards off, on the slope of the hill.

"The Black Plague!" he exclaimed, with a voice of distress which almost robbed me of my self-possession.

Following the indication of his outstretched whip I discerned with astonishment an aged woman crouching on the snowy ground, with her arms clasped about her knees, and so tattered that her red elbows came through her torn sleeves. A few ragged locks of gray hung about her long, scraggy, red, and vulture-like neck.

Strange to say, a bundle of some kind lay upon her knees,

and her haggard eyes were directed upon distant objects in the white landscape.

Sperver drew off to the left, giving the hideous object as wide a berth as he could, and I had some difficulty in following him.

"Now," I cried, "what is all this for? Are you joking?"

"Joking?—assuredly not! I never joke about such serious matters. I am not given to superstition, but I confess that I am alarmed at this meeting!"

Then turning his head, and noticing that the old woman had not moved, and that her eyes were fixed upon the same one spot, he appeared to gather a little courage.

"Fritz," he said solemnly, "you are a man of learning—you know many things of which I know nothing at all. Well, I can tell you this, that a man is in the wrong who laughs at a thing because he can't understand it. I have good reasons for calling this woman the Black Plague. She is known by that name in the whole Black Forest, but here at Nideck she has earned that title by supreme right."

And the good man pursued his way without further observation.

"Now, Sperver, just explain what you mean," I asked, "for I don't understand you."

"That woman is the ruin of us all. She is a witch. She is the cause of it all. It is she who is killing the count by inches."

"How is that possible?" I exclaimed. "How could she exercise such a baneful influence?"

"I cannot tell how it is. All I know is, that on the very day that the attack comes on, at the very moment, if you will ascend the beacon tower, you will see the Black Plague squatting down like a dark speck on the snow just between the Tiefenbach and the castle of Nideck. She sits there alone, crouching close to the snow. Every day she comes a little nearer, and every day the attacks grow worse. You would think he hears her approach. Sometimes on the first day, when the fits of trembling have come over him, he has said to me, 'Gideon, I feel her coming.' I hold him by the

arms and restrain the shuddering somewhat, but he still repeats, stammering and struggling with his agony, and his eyes staring and fixed, 'She is coming—nearer—oh—oh—she comes!' Then I go up Hugh Lupus's tower; I survey the country. You know I have a keen eye for distant objects. At last, amidst the gray mists afar off, between sky and earth, I can just make out a dark speck. The next morning that black spot has grown larger. The Count of Nideck goes to bed with chattering teeth. The next day again we can make out the figure of the old hag; the fierce attacks begin; the count cries out. The day after, the witch is at the foot of the mountain, and the consequence is that the count's jaws are set like a vice; his mouth foams; his eyes turn in his head. Vile creature! Twenty times I have had her within gunshot, and the count has bid me shed no blood. 'No, Sperver, no; let us have no bloodshed.' Poor man, he is sparing the life of the wretch who is draining his life from him, for she is killing him, Fritz; he is reduced to skin and bone."

My good friend Gideon was in too great a rage with the unhappy woman to make it possible to bring him back to calm reason. Besides, who can draw the limits around the region of possibility? Every day we see the range of reality extending more vividly. Unseen and unknown influences, marvelous correspondence, invisible bonds, some kind of mysterious magnetism, are, on the one hand, proclaimed as undoubted facts, and denied on the other with irony and skepticism, and yet who can say that after a while there will not be some astonishing revelations breaking in in the midst of us all when we least expect it? In the midst of so much ignorance it seems easy to lay a claim to wisdom and shrewdness.

I therefore only begged Sperver to moderate his anger, and by no means to fire upon the Black Plague, warning him that such a proceeding would bring serious misfortune upon him.

"Pooh!" he cried; "at the very worst they could but hang me."

"But that," I remarked, "is a great deal for an honest man to suffer."

"Not at all," he cried; "it is but one kind of death out of many. You are suffocated, that is all. I would just as soon die of that as of a hammer falling on my head, as in apoplexy, or not to be able to sleep, or smoke, or swallow, or digest my food."

"You, Gideon, with your gray beard, you have learnt a peculiar mode of reasoning."

"Gray beard or not, that is my way of seeing things. I always keep a ball in my double-barreled gun at the witch's service; from time to time I put in a fresh charge, and if I get the chance——"

He only added an expressive gesture.

"Quite wrong, Sperver, quite wrong. I agree with the Count of Nideck, and I say no bloodshed. Oceans cannot wipe away blood shed in anger. Think of that, and discharge that barrel against the first boar you meet."

These words seemed to make some impression upon the old huntsman; he hung his head and looked thoughtful.

We were then climbing the wooded steeps which separate the poor village of Tiefenbach from the Castle of Nideck.

Night had closed in. As it always happens with us after a bright clear winter's day, snow was again beginning to fall, heavy flakes dropped and melted upon our horses' manes, who were beginning now to pluck up spirits at the near prospect of the comfortable stable.

Now and then Sperver looked over his shoulder with evident uneasiness; and I myself was not altogether free from a feeling of apprehension in thinking of the strange account which the huntsman had given me of his master's complaint.

Besides all this, there is a certain harmony between external nature and the spirit of a man, and I know of nothing more depressing than a gloomy forest loaded in every branch with thick snow and hoarfrost, and moaning in the north wind. The gaunt and weird-looking trunks of

the tall pines and the gnarled and massive oaks look mournfully upon you, and fill you with melancholy thoughts.

As we ascended the rocky eminence the oaks became fewer, and scattered birches, straight and white as marble pillars, divided the dark green of the forest pines, when in a moment, as we issued from a thicket, the ancient stronghold stood before us in a heavy mass, its dark surface studded with brilliant points of light.

Sperver had pulled up before a deep gateway between two towers, barred in by an iron grating.

"Here we are," he cried, throwing the reins on the horses' necks.

He laid hold of the deer's-foot bell-handle, and the clear sound of a bell broke the stillness.

After waiting a few minutes the light of a lantern flickered in the deep archway, showing us in its semicircular frame of ruddy light the figure of a humpbacked dwarf, yellow-bearded, broad-shouldered, and wrapped in furs from head to foot.

You might have thought him, in the deep shadow, some gnome or evil spirit of earth realized out of the dreams of the Niebelungen Lieder.

He came towards us at a very leisurely pace, and laid his great flat features close against the massive grating, straining his eyes, and trying to make us out in the darkness in which we were standing.

"Is that you, Sperver?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"Open at once, Knapwurst," was the quick reply. "Don't you know how cold it is?"

"Oh, I know you now," cried the litttle man; "there's no mistaking you. You always speak as if you were going to gobble people up."

The door opened, and the dwarf, examining me with his lantern, with an odd expression in his face, received me with "Wilkommen, Herr Doctor," but which seemed to say besides: "Here is another who will have to go away as others have done." Then he quietly closed the door, whilst we alighted, and came to take our horses by the bridle.

II

Following Sperver, who ascended the staircase with rapid steps, I was still able to convince myself that the Castle of Nideck had not an undeserved reputation.

It was a true stronghold, partly cut out of the rock, such as used formerly to be called a *château d'ambuscade*. Its lofty, vaulted arches re-echoed afar with our steps, and the outside air, blowing with sharp gusts through the loopholes —narrow slits made for the archers of former days— caused our torches to flare and flicker from space to space over the faintly-illuminated protruding lines of the arches as they caught the uncertain light.

Sperver knew every nook and corner of this vast place. He turned now to the right and now to the left, and I followed him breathless. At last he stopped on a spacious landing, and said to me:

"Now, Fritz, I will leave you for a minute with the people of the Castle, to inform the young Countess Odile of your arrival."

"Do just what you think right."

"Then you will find the head butler, Tobias Offenloch, an old soldier of the regiment of Nideck. He campaigned in France under the count; and you will see his wife, a Frenchwoman, Marie Lagoutte, who pretends that she comes of a high family."

"And why should she not?"

"Of course she might; but, between ourselves, she was nothing but a *cantinière* in the Grande Armée. She brought in Tobias Offenloch upon her cart, with one of his legs gone, and he has married her out of gratitude. You understand?"

"That will do, but open, for I am numb with cold."

And I was about to push on; but Sperver, as obstinate as any other good German, was not going to let me off without edifying me upon the history of the people with whom my

lot was going to be cast for a while, and holding me by the frogs of my fur coat he went on:

"There's besides, Sébalt Kraft, the master of the hounds; he is rather a dismal fellow, but he has not his equal at sounding the horn, and there will be Karl Trumpf, the butler, and Christian Becker, and everybody, unless they have all gone to bed."

Thereupon Sperver pushed open the door, and I stood in some surprise on the threshold of a high, dark hall, the guardroom of the old lords of Nideck.

My eyes fell at first upon the three windows at the farther end, looking out upon the sheer rocky precipice. On the right stood an old sideboard in dark oak, and upon it a cask, glasses, and bottles; on the left a Gothic chimney overhung with its heavy, massive mantelpiece, empurpled by the brilliant, roaring fire underneath, and ornamented on both front and sides with wood-carvings representing scenes from boar-hunts in the Middle Ages, and along the center of the apartment a long table, upon which stood a huge lamp throwing its light upon a dozen pewter tankards.

At one glance I saw all this; but the human portion of the scene interested me most.

I recognized the major-domo, or head butler, by his wooden leg, of which I had already heard; he was of low stature, round, fat, and rosy, and his knees seldom coming within an easy range of his eyesight; a nose red and bulbous like a ripe raspberry; on his head he wore a huge hemp-coloured wig, bulging out over his fat poll; a coat of light green plush, with steel buttons as large as a five-franc piece; velvet breeches, silk stockings, and shoes garnished with silver buckles. He had just put his hand upon the top of the cask, with an air of inexpressible satisfaction beaming upon his ruddy features, and his eyes glowing in profile, from the reflection of the fire, like a couple of watch-glasses.

His wife, the worthy Marie Lagoutte, her spare figure draped in voluminous folds, her long and sallow face like a skin of chamois leather, was playing at cards with two

servants who were gravely seated on straight-backed arm-chairs. Certain small split pegs were seated astride across the nose of the old woman and that of another player, whilst the third was significantly and cunningly winking his eye and seeming to enjoy seeing them victimized upon these new Caudine Forks.

"How many cards?" he was asking.

"Two," answered the old woman.

"And you, Christian?"

"Two."

"Aha! now I have got you, then. Cut the king—now the ace—here's one, here's another. Another peg, mother! This will teach you once more not to brag about French games."

"Monsieur Christian, you don't treat the fair sex with proper respect."

"At cards you respect nobody."

"But you see I have no room left!"

"Pooh, on a nose like yours, there's always room for more!"

At that moment Sperver cried:

"Mates, here I am!"

"Ha! Gideon, back already?"

Marie Lagoutte shook off her numerous pegs with a jerk of her head. The big butler drank off his glass. Everybody turned our way.

"Is monseigneur better?"

The butler answered with a doubtful ejaculation.

"Is he just the same?"

"Much about," answered Marie Lagoutte, who never took her eyes off me.

Sperver noticed this.

"Let me introduce to you my foster-son, Doctor Fritz, from the Black Forest," he answered proudly. "Now we shall see a change, Master Tobie. Now that Fritz has come, the abominable fits will be put an end to. If I had but been listened to earlier—but better late than never."

Marie Lagoutte was still watching us, and her scrutiny

seemed satisfactory, for, addressing the major-domo, she said:

"Now, Monsieur Offenloch, hand the doctor a chair; move about a little, do! There you stand with your mouth wide open, just like a fish. Ah, sir, these Germans!"

And the good man, jumping up as if moved by a spring, came to take off my cloak.

"Permit me, sir."

"You are very kind, my dear lady."

"Give it to me. What terrible weather! Ah, monsieur, what a dreadful country this is!"

"So monseigneur is neither better nor worse," said Sperver, shaking the snow off his cap; "we are not too late, then. Ho, Kasper! Kasper!"

A little man, who had one shoulder higher than the other, and his face spotted with innumerable freckles, came out of the chimney corner.

"Here I am."

"Very good; now get ready for this gentleman the bedroom at the end of the long gallery—Hugh's room; you know which I mean."

"Yes, Sperver, in a minute."

"And you will take with you, as you go, the doctor's knapsack. Knapwurst will give it to you. As for supper——"

"Never you mind. That is my business."

"Very well, then. I will depend upon you."

The little man went out, and Gideon, after taking off his cape, left us to go and inform the young countess of my arrival.

I was rather overpowered with the attentions of Marie Lagoutte.

"Give up that place of yours, Sébalt," she cried to the kennel-keeper. "You are roasted enough by this time. Sit near the fire, monsieur le docteur; you must have very cold feet. Stretch out your legs; that's the way."

Then holding out her snuff-box to me:

"Do you take snuff?"

"No, dear madam, with many thanks."

"That is a pity," she answered, filling both nostrils. "It is the most delightful habit."

She slipped her snuff-box back into her apron pocket, and went on:

"You are not come a bit too soon. Monseigneur had his second attack yesterday; it was an awful attack, was it not, Monsieur Offenloch?"

"Furious indeed," answered the head butler gravely.

"It is not surprising," she continued, "when a man takes no nourishment. Fancy, monsieur, that for two days he has never tasted broth!"

"Nor a glass of wine," added the major-domo, crossing his hands over his portly, well-lined person.

As it seemed expected of me, I expressed my surprise, on which Tobias Offenloch came to sit at my right hand, and said:

"Doctor, take my advice; order him a bottle a day of Marcobrunner."

"And," chimed in Marie Lagoutte, "a wing of a chicken at every meal. The poor man is frightfully thin."

"We have got Marcobrunner sixty years in bottle," added the major-domo, "for it is a mistake of Madame Offenloch's to suppose that the French drank it all. And you had better order, while you are about it, now and then, a good bottle of Johannisberg. That is the best wine to set a man up again."

"Time was," remarked the master of the hounds in a dismal voice—"time was when monseigneur hunted twice a week; then he was well; when he left off hunting, then he fell ill."

"Of course it could not be otherwise," observed Marie Lagoutte. "The open air gives you an appetite. The doctor had better order him to hunt three times a week to make up for lost time."

"Two would be enough," replied the man of dogs with the same gravity; "quite enough. The hounds must have

their rest. Dogs have just as much right to rest as we have."

There was a few moments' silence, during which I could hear the wind beating against the window-panes, and rush, sighing and wailing, through the loopholes into the towers.

Sébalt sat with legs across, and his elbow resting on his knee, gazing into the fire with unspeakable dolefulness. Marie Lagoutte, after having refreshed herself with a fresh pinch, was settling her snuff into shape in its box, while I sat thinking on the strange habit people indulge in of pressing their advice upon those who don't want it.

At this moment the major-domo rose.

"Will you have a glass of wine, doctor?" said he, leaning over the back of my armchair.

"Thank you, but I never drink before seeing a patient."

"What! not even one little glass?"

"Not the smallest glass you could offer me."

He opened his eyes wide and looked with astonishment at his wife.

"The doctor is right," she said. "I am quite of his opinion. I prefer to drink with my meat, and to take a glass of cognac afterwards. That is what the ladies do in France. Cognac is more fashionable than kirschwasser!"

Marie Lagoutte had hardly finished with her dissertation when Sperver opened the door quietly and beckoned me to follow him.

I bowed to the "honorable company," and as I was entering the passage I could hear that lady saying to her husband:

"That is a nice young man. He would have made a good-looking soldier."

Sperver looked uneasy, but said nothing. I was full of my own thoughts.

A few steps under the darkling vaults of Nideck completely effaced from my memory the queer figures of Tobias and Marie Lagoutte, poor harmless creatures, existing like bats under the mighty wing of the vulture.

Soon Gideon brought me into a sumptuous apartment

hung with violet-colored velvet, relieved with gold. A bronze lamp stood in a corner, its brightness toned down by a globe of ground crystal; thick carpets, soft as the turf on the hills, made our steps noiseless. It seemed a fit abode for silence and meditation.

On entering Sperver lifted the heavy draperies which fell around an ogee window. I observed him straining his eyes to discover something in the darkened distance; he was trying to make out whether the witch still lay there crouching down upon the snow in the midst of the plain; but he could see nothing, for there was deep darkness over all.

But I had gone on a few steps, and came in sight, by the faint rays of the lamp, of a pale, delicate figure seated in a Gothic chair not far from the sick man. It was Odile of Nideck. Her long black silk dress, her gentle expression of calm self-devotion and complete resignation, the ideal angel-like cast of her sweet features, recalled to one's mind those mysterious creations of the pencil in the Middle Ages when painting was pursued as a true art, but which modern imitators have found themselves obliged to give up in despair, while at the same time they never can forget them.

I cannot say what thoughts passed rapidly through my mind at the sight of this fair creature, but certainly much of devotion mingled with my sentiments. A sense of music and harmony swept sadly through my soul, with faint impressions of the old ballads of my childhood—of those pious songs with which the kind nurses of the Black Forest rock to peaceful sleep our infant sorrows.

At my approach Odile rose.

"You are very welcome, monsieur le docteur," she said with touching kindness and simplicity; then, pointing with her finger to a recess where lay the count, she added: "There is my father."

I bowed respectfully and without answering, for I felt deeply affected, and drew near to my patient.

Sperver, standing at the head of the bed, held up the lamp with one hand, holding his fur cap in the other. Odile stood at my left hand. The light, softened by the subdued

light of the globe of ground crystal, fell softly on the face of the count.

At once I was struck with a strangeness in the physiognomy of the Count of Nideck, and in spite of all the admiration which his lovely daughter had at once obtained from me, my first conclusion was, "What an old wolf!"

And such he seemed to be, indeed. A gray head, covered with short, close hair, strangely full behind the ears, and drawn out in the face to a portentous length, the narrowness of his forehead up to its summit widening over the eyebrows, which were shaggy and met, pointing downwards over the bridge of the nose, imperfectly shading with the sable outline the cold and inexpressive eyes; the short, rough beard, irregularly spread over the angular and bony outline of the mouth—every feature of this man's dreadful countenance made me shudder, and strange notions crossed my mind about the mysterious affinities between man and the lower creation.

But I resisted my first impressions and took the sick man's hand. It was dry and wiry, yet small and strong; I found the pulse quick, feverish, and denoting great irritability.

What was I to do?

I stood considering; on the one side stood the young lady, anxiously trying to read a little hope in my face; on the other Sperver, equally anxious and watching my every movement. A painful constraint lay, therefore, upon me, yet I saw that there was nothing definite that could be attempted yet.

I dropped the arm and listened to the breathing. From time to time a convulsive sob heaved the sick man's heart, after which followed a succession of quick, short respirations. A kind of nightmare was evidently weighing him down—epilepsy, perhaps, or tetanus. But what could be the cause or origin?

I turned round full of painful thoughts.

"Is there any hope, sir?" asked the young countess.

"Yesterday's crisis is drawing to its close," I answered; "we must see if we can prevent its recurrence."

"Is there any possibility of it, sir?"

I was about to answer in general medical terms, not daring to venture any positive assertions, when the distant sound of the bell at the gate fell upon our ears.

"Visitors," said Sperver.

There was a moment's silence.

"Go and see who it is," said Odile, whose brow was for a minute shaded with anxiety. "How can one be hospitable to strangers at such a time? It is hardly possible!"

But the door opened, and a rosy face, with golden hair, appeared in the shadow, and said in a whisper:

"It is the Baron of Zimmer-Bluderich, with a servant, and he asks for shelter in the Nideck. He has lost his way among the mountains."

"Very well, Gretchen," answered the young countess kindly; "go and tell the steward to attend to the Baron de Zimmer. Inform him that the count is very ill, and that this alone prevents him from doing the honors as he would wish. Wake up some of our people to wait on him, and let everything be done properly."

Nothing could exceed the sweet and noble simplicity of the young châtelaine in giving her orders. If an air of distinction seems hereditary in some families it is surely because the exercise of the duties conferred by the possession of wealth has a natural tendency to ennoble the whole character and bearing.

These thoughts passed through my mind whilst admiring the grace and gentleness in every movement of Odile of Nideck, and that clearness and purity of outline which is only found marked in the features of the higher aristocracy, and I could recall nothing to my recollection equal to this ideal beauty.

"Go now, Gretchen," said the young countess, "and make haste."

The attendant went out, and I stood a few seconds under the influence of the charm of her manner.

Odile turned round, and addressing me, "You see, sir," said she with a sad smile, "one may not indulge in grief

without a pause; we must divide ourselves between our affection within and the world without."

"True, madam," I replied; "souls of the highest order are for the common property and advantage of the unhappy —the lost wayfarer, the sick, the hungry poor—each has his claim for a share, for God has made them like the stars of heaven to give light and pleasure to all."

The deep-fringed eyelids veiled the blue eyes for a moment, while Sperver pressed my hand.

Presently she pursued:

"Ah, if you could but restore my father's health!"

"As I have had the pleasure to inform you, madam, the crisis is past; the return must be anticipated, if possible."

"Do you hope that it may?"

"With God's help, madam, it is not impossible; I will think carefully over it."

Odile, much moved, came with me to the door. Sperver and I crossed the anteroom, where a few servants were waiting for the orders of their mistress. We had just entered the corridor when Gideon, who was walking first, turned quickly round, and, placing both his hands on my shoulders, said:

"Come, Fritz; I am to be depended upon for keeping a secret; what is your opinion?"

"I think there is no cause of apprehension for to-night."

"I know that—so you told the countess—but how about to-morrow?"

"To-morrow?"

"Yes; don't turn round. I suppose you cannot prevent the return of the compaint; do you think, Fritz, he will die of it?"

"It is possible, but hardly probable."

"Well done!" cried the good man, springing from the ground with joy; "if you don't think so, that means that you are sure."

And taking my arm, he drew me into the gallery. We had just reached it when the Baron of Zimmer-Bluderich and his groom appeared there also, marshaled by Sébalt

with a lighted torch in his hand. They were on their way to their chambers, and those two figures, with their cloaks flung over their shoulders, their loose Hungarian boots up to the knees, the body closely girt with long dark-green laced and frogged tunics, and the bearskin cap closely and warmly covering the head, were very picturesque objects by the flickering light of the pine-torch.

"There," whispered Sperver, "if I am not very much mistaken, those are our Fribourg friends; they have followed very close upon our heels."

"You are quite right: they are the men; I recognize the younger by his tall, slender figure, his aquiline nose, and his long drooping mustache."

They disappeared through a side passage.

Gideon took a torch from the wall, and guided me through quite a maze of corridors, aisles, narrow and wide passages, under high vaulted roofs and under low-built arches; who could remember? There seemed no end.

"Here is the hall of the margraves," said he; "here is the portrait-gallery, and this is the chapel, where no mass has been said since Louis the Bold became a Protestant."

All these particulars had very little interest for me.

After reaching the end we had again to go down steps; at last we happily came to the end of our journey before a low massive door. Sperver took a huge key out of his pocket, and handing me the torch, said:

"Mind the light—look out!"

At the same time he pushed open the door, and the cold outside air rushed into the narrow passage. The torch flared and sent out a volley of sparks in all directions. I thought I saw a dark abyss before me, and recoiled with fear.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried the huntsman, opening his mouth from ear to ear, "you are surely not afraid, Fritz? Come on; don't be frightened! We are upon the parapet between the castle and the old tower."

And my friend advanced to set me the example.

The narrow granite-walled platform was deep in snow,

swept in swirling banks by the angry winds. Anyone who had seen our flaring torch from below would have asked: "What are they doing up there in the clouds? what can they want at this time of the night?"

Perhaps, I thought within myself, the witch is looking up at us, and that idea gave me a fit of shuddering. I drew closer together the folds of my horseman's cloak, and with my hand upon my hat, I set off after Sperver at a run; he was raising the light above his head to show me the road, and was moving forward rapidly.

We rushed into the tower and then into Hugh Lupus's chamber. A bright fire saluted us here with its cheerful rays; how delightful to be once more sheltered by thick walls!

I had stopped while Sperver closed the door, and contemplating this ancient abode, I cried:

"Thank God! we shall rest now!"

"With a well-furnished table before us," added Gideon. "Don't stand there with your nose in the air, but rather consider what is before you—a leg of a kid, a couple of roast fowls, a pike fresh caught, with parsley sauce; cold meats and hot wines, that's what I like. Kasper has attended to my orders like a real good fellow."

Gideon spoke the truth. The meats were cold and the wines were warm, for in front of the fire stood a row of small bottles under the gentle influence of the heat.

At the sight of these good things my appetite rose in me wonderfully. But Sperver, who understood what is comfortable, stopped me.

"Fritz," said he, "don't let us be in too great a hurry; we have plenty of time; the fowls won't fly away. Your boots must hurt you. After eight hours on horseback it is pleasant to take off one's boots; that's my principle. Now sit down, put your boot between my knees; there goes one off, now the other, that's the way; now put your feet into these slippers, take off your cloak, and throw this lighter coat over your shoulders. Now we are ready."

And with his cheery summons I sat down with him to

work, one on each side of the table, remembering the German proverb—"Thirst comes from the evil one, but good wine from the Powers above."

III

We ate with the vigorous appetite which ten hours in the snows of the Black Forest would be sure to provoke.

Sperver, making indiscriminate attacks upon the kid, the fowls, and the fish, murmured with his mouth full:

"The woods, the lakes, and rivers, and the heathery hills are full of good things!"

Then he leaned over the back of his chair, and laying his hand on the first bottle that came to hand, he added:

"And we have hills green in spring, purple in autumn when the grapes ripen. Your health, Fritz!"

"Yours, Gideon."

We were a wonder to behold. We reciprocally admired each other.

The fire crackled, the forks rattled, teeth were in full activity, bottles gurgled, glasses jingled, while outside the wintry blast, the high moaning mountain winds, were mournfully chanting the dirge of the year, that strange wailing hymn with which they accompany the shock of the tempest and the swift rush of the gray clouds charged with snow and hail, while the pale moon lights up the grim and ghastly battle scene.

But we were snug under cover, and our appetite was fading away into history. Sperver had filled the "wieder komm," the "come again," with old wine of Brumberg; the sparkling froth fringed its ample borders; he presented it to me, saying:

"Drink the health of Yeri-Hans, lord of Nideck. Drink to the last drop, and show them that you mean it!"

Which was done.

Then he filled it again, and, repeating with a voice that re-echoed among the old walls, "To the recovery of my

noble master, the high and mighty lord of Nideck," drained it also.

Then a feeling of satisfied repletion stole gently over us, and we felt pleased with everything.

I fell back in my chair, with my face directed to the ceiling, and my arms hanging lazily down. I began dreamily to consider what sort of a place I had got into.

It was a low vaulted ceiling cut out of the live rock, almost oven-shaped, and hardly twelve feet high at the highest point. At the farther end I saw a sort of deep recess where lay my bed on the ground, and consisting, as I thought I could see, of a huge bear-skin above, and I could not tell what below, and within this yet another smaller niche with a figure of the Virgin Mary carved out of the same granite and crowned with a bunch of withered grass.

"You are looking over your room," said Sperver. "*Parbleu!* it is none of the biggest or grandest, not quite like the rooms in the castle. We are now in Hugh Lupus's tower, a place as old as the mountain itself, going as far back as the days of Charlemagne. In those days, as you see, people had not yet learned to build arches high, round, or pointed. They worked right into the rock."

"Well, for all that, you have put me in strange lodgings."

"Don't be mistaken, Fritz; it is the place of honor. It is here that the count put all his most distinguished friends. Mind that: Hugh Lupus's tower is the most honorable accommodation we have."

"And who was Hugh Lupus?"

"Why, Hugh the Wolf, to be sure. He was the head of the family of Nideck, a rough-and-ready warrior, I can tell you. He came to settle up here with a score of horsemen and halberdiers of his following. They climbed up this rock—the highest rock amongst these mountains. You will see this to-morrow. They constructed this tower, and proclaimed, 'Now we are the masters! Woe befall the miserable wretches who shall pass without paying toll to us! We will tear the wool off their backs, and their hide too, if need be. From this watch-tower we shall command a view

of the far distance all round. The passes of the Rhétal, of Steinbach, Roche Plate, and of the whole line of the Black Forest are under our eye. Let the Jew peddlers and the dealers beware!' And the noble fellows did what they promised. Hugh the Wolf was at their head. Knapwurst told me all about it, sitting up one night."

"Who is Knapwurst?"

"That little humpback who opened the gate for us. He is an odd fellow, Fritz, and almost lives in the library."

"So you have a man of learning at Nideck?"

"Yes, we have, the rascal! Instead of confining himself to the porter's lodge, his proper place, all the day over he is amongst the dusty books and parchments belonging to the family. He comes and goes along the shelves of the library just like a big cat. Knapwurst knows our story better than we know it ourselves. He would tell you the longest tales, Fritz, if you would only let him. He calls them chronicles —ha, ha!"

And Sperver, with the wine mounting a little into his head, began to laugh, he could hardly say why.

"So then, Gideon, you call this tower, Hugh's tower, the Hugh Lupus tower?"

"Haven't I told you so already? What are you so astonished at?"

"Nothing particular."

"But you are. I can see it in your face. You are thinking of something strange. What is it?"

"Oh, never mind! It is not the name of the tower which surprises me. What I am wondering at is, how it is that you, an old poacher, who had never lived anywhere since you were a boy but amongst the fir forests, between the snowy summits of the Wald Horn and the passes of the Rhéthal—you who, during all your prime of life, thought it the finest of fun to laugh at the count's gamekeepers, and to scour the mountain paths of the Schwartzwald, and beat the bushes there, and breathe the free air, and bask in the bright sunshine amongst the hills and valleys—here I find you, at the end of sixteen years of such a life, shut up in this red

granite hole. That is what surprises me and what I cannot understand. Come, Sperver, light your pipe, and tell me all about it."

The old poacher took out of his leathern jacket a bit of a blackened pipe; he filled it at his leisure, gathered up in the hollow of his hand a live ember, which he placed upon the bowl of his pipe; then with his eyes dreamily cast up to the ceiling, he answered meditatively:

"Old falcons, gerfalcons, and hawks, when they have long swept the plains, end their lives in a hole in a rock. Sure enough I am fond of the wide expanse of sky and land. I always was fond of it; but instead of perching by night upon a high branch of a tall tree, rocked by the wind, I now prefer to return to my cavern, to drink a glass, to pick a bone of venison, and dry my plumage before a warm fire. The Count of Nideck does not disdain Sperver, the old hawk, the true man of the woods. One evening, meeting me by moonlight, he frankly said to me: 'Old comrade, you hunt only by night. Come and hunt by day with me. You have a sharp beak and strong claws. Well, hunt away, if such is your nature; but hunt by my license, for I am the eagle upon these mountains, and my name is Nideck!'"

Sperver was silent a few minutes; then he resumed:

"That was just what suited me, and now I hunt as I used to do, and I quietly drink along with a friend my bottle of Affenthal, or——"

At that moment there was a shock that made the door vibrate; Sperver stopped and listened.

"It is a gust of wind," I said.

"No, it is something else. Don't you hear the scratching of claws? It is a dog that has escaped. Open, Lieverlé; open, Blitzen!" cried the huntsman, rising; but he had not gone a couple of steps when a formidable-looking hound of the Danish breed broke into the tower, and ran to lay his heavy paws on his master's shoulders, licking his beard and his cheeks with his long rose-colored tongue, uttering all the while short barks and yelps expressive of his joy.

Sperver had passed his arm round the dog's neck, and, turning to me, said:

"Fritz, what man could love me as this dog does? Do look at this head, these eyes, these teeth!"

He uncovered the animal's teeth, displaying a set of fangs that would have pulled down and rent a buffalo. Then repelling him with difficulty, for the dog was redoubling his caresses—

"Down, Lieverlé. I know you love me. If you did not, who would?"

Never had I seen so tremendous a dog as this Lieverlé. His height attained two feet and a half. He would have been a most formidable creature in an attack. His forehead was broad, flat, and covered with fine soft hair; his eye was keen, his paws of great length, his sides and legs a woven mass of muscles and nerves, broad over the back and shoulders, slender and tapering towards the hind legs. But he had no scent. If such monstrous and powerful hounds were endowed with the scent of the terrier, there would soon be an end of game.

Sperver had returned to his seat, and was passing his hand over Lieverlé's massive head with pride, and enumerating to me his excellent qualities.

Lieverlé seemed to understand him.

"See, Fritz, that dog will throttle a wolf with one snap of his jaws. For courage and strength, he is perfection. He is not five years old, but he is in his prime. I need not tell you that he is trained to hunt the boar. Every time we come across a herd of them I tremble for Lieverlé; his attack is too straightforward, he flies on the game as straight as an arrow. That is why I am afraid of the brutes' tusks. Lie down, Lieverlé, lie on your back!"

The dog obeyed, and presented to view his flesh-colored sides.

"Look, Fritz, at the long white seam without any hair upon it from under the thigh right up to the chest. A boar did that. Poor creature! he was holding him fast by the ear and would not let go; we tracked the two by the blood.

I was the first up with them. Seeing my Lieverlé, I gave a shout, I jumped off my horse, I caught him between my arms, flung him into my cloak, and brought him home. I was almost beside myself. Happily the vital parts had not been wounded. I sewed up his belly in spite of his howling and yelling, for he suffered fearfully; but in three days he was already licking his wound, and a dog who licks himself is already saved. You remember that, Lieverlé, hey! and aren't we fonder of each other now than ever?"

I was quite moved with the affection of the man for the dog, and of the dog for his master; they seemed to look into the very depths of each other's souls. The dog wagged his tail, and the man had tears in his eyes.

Sperver went on:

"What amazing strength! Do you see, Fritz, he has burst his cord to get to me—a rope of six strands; he found out my track and here he is! Here, Lieverlé, catch!"

And he threw to him the remains of the leg of kid. The jaws opened wide and closed again with a terrible crash, and Sperver, looking at me significantly, said:

"Fritz, if he were to grip you by your breeches you would not get away so easily!"

"Nor anyone else, I suppose."

The dog went to stretch himself at his ease full length under the mantelshelf with the leg fast between his mighty paws. He began to tear it into pieces. Sperver looked at him out of the corner of his eye with great satisfaction. The bone was fast falling into small fragments in the powerful mill that was crushing it. Lieverlé was partial to marrow!

"Aha! Fritz, if you were requested to fetch that bone away from him, what would you say?"

"I should think it a mission requiring extraordinary delicacy and tact."

Then he broke out into a hearty laugh, and Sperver, seated in his leathern easy-chair, with his left arm thrown back over his head, settled one of his legs over a stool, and the other in front of a huge log, which was dripping at its

end with the oozing sap, and darted volumes of light gray smoke to the roof.

I was still contemplating the dog, when suddenly recollecting our broken conversation, I went on:

"Now, Sperver, you have not told me everything. When you left the mountain for the castle was it not on account of the death of Gertrude, your good, excellent wife?"

Gideon frowned and a tear dimmed his eye; he drew himself up, and shaking out the ashes of his pipe upon his thumbnail, he said:

"True, my wife is dead. That drove me from the woods. I could not look upon the valley of Roche Creuse without pain. I turned my flight in this direction; I hunt less in the woods, and I can see it all from higher up, and if by chance the pack tails off in that direction I let them go. I turn back and try to think of something else."

Sperver had grown taciturn. With his head drooped upon his breast, his eyes fixed on the stone floor, he sat silent. I felt sorry to have awakened these melancholy recollections in him. Then, my thoughts once more returning to the Black Plague groveling in the snow, I felt a shivering of horror.

How strange! just one word had sent us into a train of unhappy thoughts. A whole world of remembrances was called up by a chance.

I know not how long this silence lasted, when a growl, deep, long, and terrible, like distant thunder, made us start.

We looked at the dog. The half-gnawed bone was still between his forepaws, but with head raised high, ears cocked up, and flashing eye, he was listening intently—listening to the silence as it were, and an angry quivering ran down the length of his back.

Sperver and I fixed on each other anxious eyes; yet there was not a sound, not a breath outside, for the wind had gone down; nothing could be heard but the deep protracted growl from deep down in the chest of the noble hound.

Suddenly he sprang up and bounded impetuously against the wall with a hoarse, rough bark of fearful loudness.

The walls re-echoed just as if a clap of thunder had rattled the casements.

Lieverlé, with his head low down, seemed to want to see through the granite, and his lips drawn back from his teeth discovered them to the very gums, displaying two close rows of fangs white as ivory. Still he growled. For a moment he would stop abruptly with his nose snuffing close to the wall, next the floor, with strong respirations; then he would rise again in a fresh rage, and with his forepaws seemed as if he would break through the granite.

We watched in silence without being able to understand what caused his excitement.

Another yell of rage more terrible than the first made us spring from our seats.

"Lieverlé! what possesses you? Are you going mad?"

He seized a log and began to sound the wall, which only returned the dead, hard sound of a wall of solid rock. There was no hollow in it; yet the dog stood in the posture of attack.

"Decidedly you must have been dreaming bad dreams," said the huntsman. "Come, lie down, and don't worry us any more with your nonsense."

At that moment a noise outside reached our ears. The door opened, and the fat, honest countenance of Tobias Offenloch with his lantern in one hand and his stick in the other, his three-cornered hat on his head, appeared, smiling and jovial, in the opening.

"*Salut! l'honorable compagnie!*" he cried as he entered; "what are you doing here?"

"It was that rascal Lieverlé who made all that row. Just fancy—he set himself up against that wall as if he smelt a thief. What could he mean?"

"Why, *parbleu!* he heard the dot, dot of my wooden leg, to be sure, stumping up the tower-stairs," answered the jolly fellow, laughing.

Then setting his lantern on the table:

"That will teach you, friend Gideon, to tie up your dogs. You are foolishly weak over your dogs—very foolishly.

Those beasts of yours won't be satisfied till they have put us all out of doors. Just this minute I met Blitzen in the long gallery; he sprang at my leg—see, there are the marks of his teeth in proof of what I say; and it is quite a new leg—a brute of a hound!"

"Tie up my dogs! That's rather a new idea," said the huntsman. "Dogs tied up are good for nothing at all; they grow too wild. Besides, was not Lieverlé tied up, after all? See his broken cord."

"What I tell you is not on my own account. When they come near me I always hold up my stick and put my wooden leg foremost—that is my discipline. I say, dogs in their kennels, cats on the roof, and the people in the castle."

Tobias sat down after thus delivering himself of his sentiments, and with both elbows on the table, his eyes expanding with delight, he confided to us that just now he was a bachelor.

"You don't mean that!"

"Yes, Marie Anne is sitting up with Gertrude in monseigneur's anteroom."

"Then you are in no hurry to go away?"

"No, none at all. I should like to stay in your company."

"How unfortunate that you should have come in so late!" remarked Sperver; "all the bottles are empty."

The disappointment of the discomfited major-domo excited my compassion. The poor man would so gladly have enjoyed his widowhood. But in spite of my endeavors to repress it a long yawn extended wide my mouth.

"Well, another time," said he, rising. "What is only put off is not given up."

And he took his lantern.

"Good-night, gentlemen."

"Stop—wait for me," cried Gideon. "I can see Fritz is sleepy; we will go down together."

"Very gladly, Sperver; on our way we will have a word with Trumpf, the butler. He is downstairs with the rest, and Knapwurst is telling them tales."

"All right. Good-night, Fritz."

"Good-night, Gideon. Don't forget to send for me if the count is taken worse."

"I will do as you wish. Lieverlé, come."

They went out, and as they were crossing the platform I could hear the Nideck clock strike eleven. I was tired out and soon fell asleep.

IV

Daylight was beginning to tinge with bluish gray the only window in my dungeon tower when I was roused out of my niche in the granite by the prolonged, distant notes of a hunting horn.

There is nothing more sad and melancholy than the wail of this instrument when the day begins to struggle with the night—when not a sigh nor a sound besides comes to molest the solitary reign of silence; it is especially the last, long note which spreads in widening waves over the immensity of the plain beneath, awaking the distant, far-off echoes amongst the mountains, that has in it a poetic element that stirs up the depths of the soul.

Leaning upon my elbow in my bearskin, I lay listening to the plaintive sound, which suggested something of the feudal ages. The contemplation of my chamber, the ancient den of the Wolf of Nideck, with its low, dark arch, threatening almost to come down to crush the occupant; and further on that small leaden window, just touching the ceiling, more wide than high, and deeply recessed in the wall, added to the reality of the impression.

I arose quickly and ran to open the window wide.

Then presented itself to my astonished eyes such a wondrous spectacle as no mortal tongue, no pen of man, can describe—the wide prospect that the eagle, the denizen of the high Alps, sweeps with his far-reaching ken every morning at the rising of the deep purple veil that overhung the horizon by night—mountains farther off! mountains far away! and yet again in the blue distance—mountains still, blending with the gray mists of the morning in the shadowy horizon!—motionless billows that sink into peace and still-

ness in the blue distance of the plains of Lorraine. Such is a faint idea of the mighty scenery of the Vosges, boundless forests, silver lakes, dazzling crests, ridges, and peaks projecting their clear outlines upon the steel-blue of the valleys clothed in snow. Beyond this, infinite space!

Could any enthusiasm of poet or skill of painter attain the sublime elevation of such a scene as that? I stood mute with admiration. At every moment the details stood out more clearly in the advancing light of morning; hamlets, farmhouses, villages, seemed to rise and peep out of every undulation of the land. A little more attention brought more and more numerous objects into view.

I had leaned out of my window rapt in contemplation for more than a quarter of an hour when a hand was laid lightly upon my shoulder; I turned round startled, when the calm figure and quiet smile of Gideon saluted me, with:

"Guten Tag, Fritz! Good-morning!"

Then he also rested his arms on the window, smoking his short pipe. He extended his hand and said:

"Look, Fritz, and admire! You are a son of the Black Forest, and you must admire all that. Look there below; there is Roche Creuse. Do you see it? Don't you remember Gertrude? How far off those times seem now!"

Sperver brushed away a tear. What could I say?

We sat long contemplating and meditating over this grand spectacle. From time to time the old poacher, noticing me with my eyes fixed upon some distant object, would explain:

"That is the Wald Horn; this is the Tiefenthal; there's the fall of the Steinbach; it has stopped running now; it is hanging down in great fringed sheets, like the curtains over the shoulder of the Harberg—a cold winter's cloak! Down there is a path that leads to Fribourg; in a fortnight's time it will be difficult to trace it."

Thus our time passed away.

I could not tear myself away from so beautiful a prospect. A few birds of prey, with wings hollowed into a graceful curve sharp-pointed at each end, the fan-shaped tail spread out, were silently sweeping round the rock-hewn tower;

herons flew unscathed above them, owing their safety from the grasp of the sharp claws and the tearing beak to the elevation of their flight.

Not a cloud marred the beauty of the blue sky; all the snow had fallen to earth; once more the huntsman's horn awoke the echoes.

"That is my friend Sébalt lamenting down there," said Sperver. "He knows everything about horses and dogs, and he sounds the hunter's horn better than any man in Germany. Listen, Fritz, how soft and mellow the notes are! Poor Sébalt! he is pining away over monseigneur's illness; he cannot hunt as he used to do. His only comfort is to get up every morning at sunrise on to the Altenberg and play the count's favorite airs. He thinks he shall be able to cure him that way!"

Sperver, with the good taste of a man who appreciates beautiful scenery, had offered no interruption to my contemplations; but when, my eyes dazzled and swimming with so much light, I turned round to the darkness of the tower, he said to me:

"Fritz, it's all right; the count has had no fresh attack."

These words brought me back to a sense of the realities of life.

"Ah, I am very glad!"

"It is all owing to you, Fritz."

"What do you mean? I have not prescribed yet."

"What signifies? You were there; that was enough."

"You are only joking, Gideon! What is the use of my being present if I don't prescribe?"

"Why, you bring him good luck!"

I looked straight at him, but he was not even smiling!

"Yes, Fritz, you are just a messenger of good; the last two years the lord had another attack the next day after the first, then a third and a fourth. You have put an end to that. What can be clearer?"

"Well, to me it is not so very clear; on the contrary, it is very obscure."

"We are never too old to learn," the good man went on.

"Fritz, there are messengers of evil and there are messengers of good. Now that rascal Knapwurst, he is a sure messenger of ill. If ever I meet him as I am going out hunting, I am sure of some misadventure; my gun misses fire, or I sprain my ankle, or a dog gets ripped up!—all sorts of mischief come. So, being quite aware of this, I always try and set off at early daybreak, before that author of mischief, who sleeps like a dormouse, has opened his eyes; or else I slip out by a back way by the postern gate. Don't you see?"

"I understand you very well, but your ideas seem to me very strange, Gideon."

"You, Fritz," he went on, without noticing my interruption—"you are a most excellent lad; Heaven has covered your head with innumerable blessings; just one glance at your jolly countenance, your frank, clear eyes, your good-natured smile, is enough to make anyone happy. You positively bring good luck with you. I have always said so, and now would you like to have a proof?"

"Yes, indeed I should. It would be worth while to know how much there is in me without my having any knowledge of it."

"Well," said he, grasping my wrist, "look down there!"

He pointed to a hillock at a couple of gunshots from the castle.

"Do you see there a rock half-buried in the snow, with a ragged bush by its side?"

"Quite well."

"Do you see anything near?"

"No."

"Well, there is a reason for that. You have driven away the Black Plague! Every year at the second attack, there she was, holding her feet between her hands. By night she lighted a fire; she warmed herself and boiled roots. She bore a curse with her. This morning the very first thing which I did was to get up there. I climbed up the beacon tower; I looked well all round; the old hag was nowhere to be seen. I shaded my eyes with my hand. I looked up

and down, right and left, and everywhere; not a sign of the creature anywhere. She had scented you evidently."

And the good fellow, in a fit of enthusiasm, shook me warmly by the hand, crying with unchecked emotion:

"Ah, Fritz, how glad I am that I brought you here! The witch *will* be sold, eh?"

Well, I confess I felt a little ashamed that I had been all my life such a very well-deserving young man without knowing anything of the circumstances myself.

"So, Sperver," I said, "the count has spent a good night?"

"A very good one."

"Then I am very well pleased. Let us go down."

We again traversed the high parapet, and I was now better able to examine this way of access, the ramparts of which arose from a prodigious depth; and they were extended along the sharp, narrow ridge of the rock down to the very bottom of the valley. It was a long flight of jagged, precipitous steps descending from the wolf's den, or rather eagle's nest, down to the deep valley below.

Gazing down I felt giddy, and recoiling in alarm to the middle of the platform, I hastily descended down the path which led to the main building.

We had already traversed several great corridors when a great open door stood before us. I looked in, and descried, at the top of a double ladder, the little gnome Knapwurst, whose strange appearance had struck me the night before.

The hall itself attracted my attention by its imposing aspect. It was the receptacle of the archives of the house of Nideck, a high, dark, dusty apartment, with long Gothic windows, reaching from the angle of the ceiling to within a couple of yards from the floor.

There were collected along spacious shelves, by the care of the old abbots, not only all the documents, title-deeds, and family genealogies of the house of Nideck, establishing their rights and their alliances, and connections with all the great historic families of Germany, but besides these there were all the chronicles of the Black Forest, the collected works of

the old Minnesingers, and great folio volumes from the presses of Gutenberg and Faust, entitled to equal veneration on account of their remarkable history and the enduring solidity of their binding. The deep shadows of the groined vaults, their arches divided by massive ribs, and descending partly down the cold gray walls, reminded one of the gloomy cloisters of the Middle Ages. And amidst these characteristic surroundings sat an ugly dwarf on the top of his ladder, with a red-edged volume upon his bony knees, his head half buried in a rough fur cap, small gray eyes, wide misshapen mouth, humps on back and shoulders, a most uninviting object, the familiar spirit—the rat, as Sperver would have it—of this last refuge of all the learning belonging to the princely race of Nideck.

But a truly historical importance belonged to this chamber in the long series of family portraits, filling almost entirely one side of the ancient library. All were there, men and women; from Hugh the Wolf to Yeri-Hans, the present owner; from the first rough daub of barbarous times to the perfect work of the best modern painters.

My attention was naturally drawn in that direction.

Hugh I., a bald-headed figure, seemed to glare upon you like a wolf stealing upon you round the corner of a wood. His gray bloodshot eyes, his red beard, and his large hairy ears gave him a fearful and ferocious aspect.

Next to him, like the lamb next to the wolf, was the portrait of a lady of youthful years, with gentle blue eyes, hands crossed on the breast over a book of devotions, and tresses of fair long silky hair encircling her sweet countenance with a glorious golden aureola. This picture struck me by its wonderful resemblance to Odile of Nideck.

I have never seen anything more lovely and more charming than this old painting on wood, which was stiff enough indeed in its outline, but delightfully refreshing and ingenuous.

I had examined this picture attentively for some minutes when another female portrait, hanging at its side, drew my attention reluctantly away. Here was a woman of the true

Visigoth type, with a wide low forehead, yellowish eyes, prominent cheek-bones, red hair, and a nose hooked like an eagle's beak.

That woman must have been an excellent match for Hugh, thought I, and I began to consider the costume, which answered perfectly to the energy displayed in the head, for the right hand rested upon a sword, and an iron breastplate inclosed the figure.

I should have some difficulty in expressing the thoughts which passed through my mind in the examination of these three portraits. My eye passed from the one to the other with singular curiosity.

Sperver, standing at the library door, had aroused the attention of Knapwurst, with a sharp whistle, which made that worthy send a glance in his direction, though it did not succeed in fetching him down from his elevation.

"Is it me that you are whistling to like a dog?" said the dwarf.

"I am, you vermin! It is an honor you don't deserve."

"Just listen to me, Sperver," replied the little man with sublime scorn; "you cannot spit so high as my shoe!" which he contemptuously held out.

"Suppose I were to come up?"

"If you come up a single step I'll squash you flat with this volume!"

Gideon laughed, and replied:

"Don't get angry, friend; I don't mean to do you any harm; on the contrary, I greatly respect you for your learning; but what I want to know is what you are doing here so early in the morning, by lamplight? You look as if you had spent the night here."

"So I have; I have been reading all night."

"Are not the days long enough for you to read in?"

"No; I am following out an important inquiry, and I don't mean to sleep until I am satisfied."

"Indeed; and what may this very important question be?"

"I have to ascertain under what circumstances Ludwig

of Nideck discovered my ancestor, Otto the Dwarf, in the forests of Thuringia. You know, Sperver, that my ancestor, Otto, was only a cubit high—that is, a foot and a half. He delighted the world with his wisdom, and made an honorable figure at the coronation of Duke Rodolphe. Count Ludwig had him inclosed in a cold roast peacock, served up in all his plumage. It was at that time one of the greatest delicacies, served up garnished all round with sucking-pigs, gilded and silvered. During the banquet Otto kept spreading the peacock's tail, and all the lords, courtiers, and ladies of high birth were astonished and delighted at this wonderful piece of mechanism. At last he came out, sword in hand, and shouted with a loud voice: 'Long live Duke Rodolphe!' and the cry was repeated with acclamations by the whole table. Bernard Herzog makes mention of this event, but he has neglected to inform us where this dwarf came from, whether he was of lofty lineage, or of base extraction, which latter, however, is very improbable, for the lower sort of people have not so much sense as that."

I was astounded at so much pride in so diminutive a being, yet my curiosity prevented me from showing too much of my feelings, for he alone could supply me with information upon the portraits that accompanied that of Hugh Lupus.

"Monsieur Knapwurst," I began very respectfully, "would you oblige me by enlightening me upon certain historic doubts?"

"Speak, sir, without any constraint; on the subject of family history and chronicles I am entirely at your service. Other matters don't interest me."

"I desire to learn some particulars respecting the two portraits on each side of the founder of this race."

"Aha!" cried Knapwurst, with a glow of satisfaction lighting up his hideous features; "you mean Hedwige and Huldine, the two wives of Hugh Lupus."

And laying down his volume, he descended from his ladder to speak more at ease. His eyes glistened, and the

delight of gratified vanity beamed from them as he displayed his vast erudition.

When he had arrived at my side he bowed to me with ceremonious gravity. Sperver stood behind us, very well satisfied that I was admiring the dwarf of Nideck. In spite of the ill-luck which, in his opinion, accompanied the little monster's appearance, he respected and boasted of his superior knowledge.

"Sir," said Knapwurst, pointing with his yellow hand to the portraits, "Hugh of Nideck, the first of his illustrious race, married, in 832, Hedwige of Lutzelbourg, who brought to him in dowry the counties of Giromani and Haut Barr, the castles of Geroldseck, Teufelshorn, and others. Hugh Lupus had no issue by his first wife, who died young, in the year of our Lord, 837. Then Hugh, having become lord and owner of the dowry, refused to give it up, and there were terrible battles between himself and his brothers-in-law. But his second wife, Huldine, whom you see there in a steel breastplate, aided him by her sage counsel. It is unknown whence or of what family she came, but for all that she saved Hugh's life, who had been made prisoner by Frantz of Lutzelbourg. He was to have been hanged that very day, and a gibbet had already been set up on the ramparts, when Huldine, at the head of her husband's vassals, whom she had armed and inspired with her own courage, bravely broke in, released Hugh, and hung Frantz in his place. Hugh had married his wife in 842, and had three children by her."

"So," I resumed pensively, "the first of these wives was called Hedwige, and the descendants of Nideck are not related to her?"

"Not at all."

"Are you quite sure?"

"I can show you our genealogical tree; Hedwige had no children; Huldine, the second wife, had three."

"That is surprising to me."

"Why so?"

"I thought I traced a resemblance."

"Oho! resemblance! Rubbish!" cried Knapwurst, with a discordant laugh. "See—look at this wooden snuff-box; in it you see a portrait of my great-grandfather, Hanswurst. His nose is as long and as pointed as an extinguisher, and his jaws are like nutcrackers. How does that affect his being the grandfather of me—of a man with finely-formed features and an agreeable mouth?"

"Oh, no!—of course not."

"Well, so it is with the Nidecks. They may some of them be like Hedwige, but for all that Huldine is the head of their ancestry. See the genealogical tree. Now, sir, are you satisfied?"

Then we separated—Knapwurst and I—excellent friends.

V

"NEVERTHELESS," thought I, "there is the likeness. It is not chance. What is chance? There is no such thing; it is nonsense to talk of chance. It must be something higher!"

I was following my friend Sperver, deep in thought, who had now resumed his walk down the corridor. The portrait of Hedwige, in all its artless simplicity, mingled in my mind with the face of Odile.

Suddenly Gideon stopped, and raising my eyes, I saw that we were standing before the count's door.

"Come in, Fritz," he said, "and I will give the dogs a feed. When the master's away the servants neglect their duty; I will come for you by and by."

I entered, more desirous of seeing the young lady than the count, her father; I was blaming myself for my remissness, but there is no controlling one's interest and affections. I was much surprised to see in the half-light of the alcove the reclining figure of the count, leaning upon his elbow and observing me with profound attention. I was so little prepared for this examination that I stood rather dispossessed of self-command.

"Come nearer, monsieur le docteur," he said in a weak but firm voice, holding out his hand. "My faithful Sperver has often mentioned your name to me; and I was anxious to make your acquaintance."

"Let us hope, my lord, that it will be continued under more favorable circumstances. A little patience, and we shall avert this attack."

"I think not," he replied. "I feel my time drawing near."

"You are mistaken, my lord."

"No; Nature grants us, as a last favor, to have a presentiment of our approaching end."

"How often I have seen such presentiments falsified!" I said with a smile.

He fixed his eyes searchingly upon me, as is usual with patients expressing anxiety about their prospects. It is a difficult moment for the doctor. The moral strength of his patient depends upon the expression of the firmness of his convictions; the eye of the sufferer penetrates into the innermost soul of his consciousness; if he believes that he can discover any hint or shade of doubt, his fate is sealed; depression sets in; the secret springs that maintain the elasticity of the spirit give way, and the disorder has it all its own way.

I stood my examination firmly and successfully, and the count seemed to regain confidence; he again pressed my hand, and resigned himself calmly and confidently to my treatment.

Not until then did I perceive Mademoiselle Odile and an old lady, no doubt her governess, seated by her bedside at the other end of the alcove.

They silently saluted me, and suddenly the picture in the library reappeared before me.

"It is she," I said, "Hugh's first wife. There is the fair and noble brow, there are the long lashes, and that sad, unfathomable smile. Oh, how much past telling lies in a woman's smile! Seek not, then, for unmixed joy and pleasure! Her smile serves but to veil untold sorrows,

anxiety for the future, even heartrending cares. The maid, the wife, the mother, smile and smile, even when the heart is breaking and the abyss is opening. Oh, woman! this is thy part in the mortal struggle of human life!"

I was pursuing these reflections when the lord of Nideck began to speak:

"If my dear child, Odile, would but consult my wishes, I believe my health would return."

I looked towards the young countess; she fixed her eyes on the floor, and seemed to be praying silently.

"Yes," the sick man went on, "I should then return to life; the prospect of seeing myself surrounded by a young family, and of pressing grandchildren to my heart, and beholding the succession to my house, would revive me."

At the mild and gentle tone of entreaty in which this was said I felt deeply moved with compassion; but the young lady made no reply.

In a minute or two the count, who kept his watchful eyes upon her, went on:

"Odile, you refuse to make your father a happy man? I only ask for a faint hope. I fix no time. I won't limit your choice. We will go to court. There you will have a hundred opportunities of marrying with distinction and with honor. Who would not be proud to win my daughter's hand? You shall be perfectly free to decide for yourself."

He paused.

There is nothing more painful to a stranger than these family quarrels. There are such contending interests, so many private motives at work, that mere modesty should make it our duty to place ourselves out of hearing of such discussions. I felt pained, and would gladly have retired. But the circumstances of the case forbade this.

"My dear father," said Odile, as if to evade any further discussion, "you will get better. Heaven will not take you from those who love you. If you but knew the fervor with which I pray for you!"

"That is not an answer," said the count, dryly. "What

objection can you make to my proposal? Is it not fair and natural? Am I to be deprived of the consolations vouchsafed to the neediest and most wretched? You know I have acted towards you openly and frankly."

"You have, my father."

"Then give me your reason for your refusal."

"My resolution is formed—I have consecrated myself to God."

So much firmness in so frail a being made me tremble. She stood like the sculptured Madonna in Hugh's tower, calm and immovable, however weak in appearance.

The eyes of the count kindled with an ominous fire. I tried to make the young countess understand by signs how gladly I would hear her give the least hope, and calm his rising passion; but she seemed not to see me.

"So," he cried in a smothered tone, as if he were strangling—"so you will look on and see your father perish? A word would restore him to life, and you refuse to speak that one word?"

"Life is not in the hand of man, for it is God's gift; my word can be of no avail."

"Those are nothing but pious maxims," answered the count scornfully, "to release you from your plain duty. But has not God said, 'Honor thy father and thy mother?'"

"I do honor you," she said gently. "But it is my duty not to marry."

I could hear the grinding and gnashing of the man's teeth. He lay apparently calm, but presently turned abruptly and cried:

"Leave me; the sight of you is offensive to me!"

And addressing me as I stood by agitated with conflicting feelings:

"Doctor," he cried, with a savage grin, "have you any violent malignant poison about you to give me—something that will destroy me like a thunderbolt? It would be a mercy to poison me like a dog, rather than let me suffer as I am doing."

His features writhed convulsively, his color became livid.

Odile rose and advanced to the door.

"Stay!" he howled furiously—"stay, till I have cursed you!"

So far I had stood by without speaking, not venturing to interfere between father and daughter, but now I could refrain no longer.

"Monseigneur," I cried, "for the sake of your own health, for the sake of mere justice and fairness, do calm yourself; your life is at stake."

"What matters my life? what matters the future? Is there a knife here to put an end to me? Let me die!"

His excitement rose every minute. I seemed to dread lest in some frenzied moment he should spring from the bed and destroy his child's life. But she, calm though deadly pale, knelt at the door, which was standing open, and outside I could see Sperver, whose features betrayed the deepest anxiety. He drew near without noise, and bending towards Odile:

"Oh, mademoiselle!" he whispered—"mademoiselle, the count is such a worthy, good man. If you would but just say only, 'Perhaps—by and by—we shall see.'"

She made no reply, and did not change her attitude.

At this moment I persuaded the lord of Nideck to take a few drops of laudanum; he sank back with a sigh, and soon his panting and irregular breathing became more measured under the influence of a deep and heavy slumber.

Odile arose, and her aged friend, who had not opened her lips, went out with her. Sperver and I watched their slowly-retreating figures. There was a calm grandeur in the step of the young countess, which seemed to express a consciousness of duty fulfilled.

When she disappeared down the long corridor, Gideon turned towards me.

"Well, Fritz," he said gravely, "what is your opinion?"

I bent my head down without answering. This girl's incredible firmness astonished and bewildered me.

VI

Sperver's indignation was mounting.

"There's the happiness and felicity of the rich! What is the good of being master of Nideck, with castles, forests, lakes, and all the best parts of the Black Forest, when an innocent-looking damsel comes and says to you in her sweet, soft voice, 'Is that your will? Well, it is not mine. Do you say I must? Well, I say no, I won't.' Is it not awful? Would it not be better to be a woodcutter's son and live quietly upon the wages of your day's work? Come on, Fritz; let us be off. I am suffocating here; I want to get into the open air."

And the good fellow, seizing my arm, dragged me down the corridor.

It was now about nine. The sky had been fair when we got up, but now the clouds had again covered the dreary earth, the north wind was raising the snow in ghostly eddies against the window-panes, and I could scarcely distinguish the summits of the neighboring mountains.

We were going down the stairs which led into the hall, when, at a turn in the corridor, we found ourselves face to face with Tobias Offenloch, the worthy major-domo, in a great state of palpitation.

"Halloo!" he cried, closing our way with his stick right across the passage; "where are you off to in such a hurry? What about your breakfast?"

"Breakfast! which breakfast do you mean?" asked Sperver.

"What do you mean by pretending to forget what breakfast? Are not you and I to breakfast this very morning with Doctor Fritz?"

"Aha! so we are! I had forgotten all about it."

And Offenloch burst into a great laugh which divided his jolly face from ear to ear.

"Ha, ha! this is rather beyond a joke. And I was afraid of being too late! Come, let us be moving. Kasper is

upstairs waiting. I ordered him to lay the breakfast in your room; I thought we should be more comfortable there. Good-by for the present, doctor."

"Are you coming up with us?" asked Sperver.

"No, I am going to tell the countess that the Baron de Zimmer-Bluderich begs the honor to thank her in person before he leaves the castle."

"The Baron de Zimmer?"

"Yes, that stranger who came yesterday in the middle of the night."

"Well, you must make haste."

"Yes, I shall not be long. Before you have done uncorking the bottles I shall be with you again."

And he hobbled away as fast as he could.

The mention of breakfast had given a different turn to Sperver's thoughts.

"Exactly so," he observed, turning back; "the best way to drown all your cares is to drink a draught of good wine. I am very glad we are going to breakfast in my room. Under those great high vaults in the fencing-school, sitting round a small table, you feel just like mice nibbling a nut in a corner of a big church. Here we are, Fritz. Just listen to the wind whistling through the arrow-slits. In half an hour there will be a storm."

He pushed the door open; and Kasper, who was only drumming with his fingers upon the window-panes, seemed very glad to see us. That little man had flaxen hair and a snub nose. Sperver had made him his factotum; it was he who took to pieces and cleaned his guns, mended the riding-horses' harness, fed the dogs in his absence, and superintended in the kitchen the preparation of his favorite dishes. On grand occasions he was outrider. He now stood with a napkin over his arm, and was gravely uncorking the long-necked bottle of Rhenish.

"Kasper," said his master, as soon as he had surveyed this satisfactory state of things—"Kasper, I was very well pleased with you yesterday; everything was excellent; the roast kid, the chicken, and the fish. I like fair play, and

when a man has done his duty, I like to tell him so. To-day I am quite as well satisfied. The boar's head looks excellent with its white-wine sauce; so does the crayfish soup. Isn't it your opinion too, Fritz?"

I assented.

"Well," said Sperver, "since it is so, you shall have the honor of filling our glasses. I mean to raise you step by step, for you are a very deserving fellow."

Kasper looked down bashfully and blushed; he seemed to enjoy his master's praises.

We took our places, and I was wondering at this quondam poacher, who in years gone by was content to cook his own potatoes in his cottage, now assuming all the airs of a great seigneur. Had he been born lord of Nideck, he could not have put on a more noble and dignified attitude at table. A single glance brought Kasper to his side, made him bring such and such a bottle, or bring the dish he required.

We were just going to attack the boar's head when Master Tobias appeared in person, followed by no less a personage than the Baron of Zimmer-Bluderich, attended by his groom.

We rose from our seats. The young baron advanced to meet us with head uncovered. It was a noble-looking head, pale and haughty, with a surrounding of fine dark hair. He stopped before Sperver.

"Monsieur," said he, in that pure Saxon accent which no other dialect can approach, "I am come to ask you for information as to this locality. Madame la Comtesse de Nideck tells me that no one knows these mountains so well as yourself."

"That is quite true, monseigneur, and I am quite at your service."

"Circumstances of great urgency oblige me to start in the midst of the storm," replied the baron, pointing to the window-panes, thickly covered with flakes of snow. "I must reach Wald Horn, six leagues from this place!"

"That will be a hard matter, my lord, for all the roads are blocked up with snow."

" I am quite aware of that, but necessity obliges," returned the baron.

" You must have a guide, then. I will go, if you will allow me, to Sébalt Kraft, the head huntsman at Nideck. He knows the mountains almost as well as I do."

" I am much obliged to you for your kind offers, and I am very grateful, but still I cannot accept them. Your instructions will be quite sufficient."

Sperver bowed, then advancing to a window, he opened it wide. A furious blast of wind rushed in, driving the whirling snow as far as the corridor, and slammed the door with a crash.

I remained by my chair, leaning on its back. Kasper slunk into a corner. Sperver and the baron, with his groom, stood at the open window.

" Gentlemen," said Sperver, with a loud voice, to make himself heard above the howling winds, and with arm extended, " you see the country mapped out before you. If the weather was fair I would take you up into the tower, and then we could see the whole of the Black Forest at our feet, but it is no use now. Here you can see the peak of the Altenberg. Farther on behind that white ridge you may see the Wald Horn, beaten by a furious storm. You must make straight for the Wald Horn. From the summit of the rock, which seems formed like a miter, and is called Roche Fendue, you will see three peaks, the Behrenkopp, the Geierstein, and the Trielfels. It is by this last one at the right that you must proceed. There is a torrent across the valley of the Rhétal, but it must be frozen now. In any case, if you can get no farther, you will find on your left, on following the bank, a cavern half-way up the hill, called Roche Creuse. You can spend the night there, and tomorrow very likely, if the wind falls, you will see the Wald Horn before you. If you are lucky enough to meet with a charcoal-burner, he might, perhaps, show you where there is a ford over the stream; but I doubt whether one will be found anywhere on such a day as this. There are none from our neighborhood. Only be careful to go right round

the base of the Behrenkopp, for you could not get down the other side. It is a precipice."

During these observations I was watching Sperver, whose clear, energetic tones indicated the different points in the road with the greatest precision, and I watched, too, the young baron, who was listening with the closest attention. No obstacle seemed to alarm him. The old groom seemed not less bent upon the enterprise.

Just as they were leaving the window a momentary light broke through the gray snow-clouds—just one of those moments when the eddying wind lays hold of the falling clouds of snow and flings them back again like floating garments of white. Then for a moment there was a glimpse of the distance. The three peaks stood out behind the Altenberg. The description which Sperver had given of invisible objects became visible for a few moments; then the air again was veiled in ghostly clouds of flying snow.

"Thank you," said the baron. "Now I have seen the point I am to make for; and, thanks to your explanations, I hope to reach it."

Sperver bowed without answering. The young man and his servant, having saluted us, retired slowly and gravely.

Gideon shut the window, and addressing Master Tobias and me, said:

"The deuce must be in the man to start off in such horrible weather as this. I could hardly turn out a wolf on such a day as this. However, it is their business, not mine. I seem to remember that young man's face, and his servant's too. Now, let us drink! Maître Tobie, your health!"

I had gone to the window, and as the Baron Zimmer and his groom mounted on horseback in the middle of the court-yard, in spite of the snow which was filling the air, I saw at the left, in a turret, pierced with long Gothic windows, the pale countenance of Odile, directed long and anxiously towards the young man.

"Halloo, Fritz! what are you doing?"

"I am only looking at those strangers' horses."

"Oh, the Wallachians! I saw them this morning in the stable. They are splendid animals."

The horsemen galloped away at full speed, and the curtain in the turret-window dropped.

VII

Several uneventful days followed. My life at Nideck was becoming dull and monotonous. Every morning there was the doleful bugle-call of the huntsman, whose occupation was gone; then came a visit to the count; after that breakfast, with Sperver's interminable speculations upon the Black Plague, the incessant gossiping and chattering of Marie Lagoutte, Maître Tobias, and all that pack of idle servants, who had nothing to do but eat and drink, smoke, and go to sleep. The only man who had any kind of individual existence was Knapwurst, who sat buried up to the tip of his red nose in old chronicles all the day long, careless of the cold, so long as there was anything left to find out in his curious researches.

My weariness of all this may easily be imagined. Ten times had Sperver taken me over the stables and the kennels; the dogs were beginning to know me. I knew by heart all the coarse pleasantries of the major-domo over his bottles, and Marie Lagoutte's invariable replies. Sébalt's melancholy was infecting me: I would gladly have blown a little on his horn to tell the mountains of my ennui, and my eyes were incessantly directed towards Fribourg.

Still the disorder of Yeri-Hans, lord of Nideck, was taking its usual course, and this gave my only occupation any serious interest. All the particulars which Sperver had made me acquainted with, appeared clearly before me; sometimes the count, waking up with a start, would half rise, and supported on his elbow, with neck outstretched and haggard eyes, would mutter, "She is coming, she is coming!"

Then Gideon would shake his head and ascend the signal-

tower, but neither right nor left could the Black Plague be discovered.

After long reflection upon this strange malady, I had come to the conclusion that the sufferer was insane. The strange influence that the old hag exercised over him, his alternate phases of madness and lucidity, all confirmed me in this view.

Medical men who have given especial attention to the subject of mental aberrations are well aware that periodical madness is of not unfrequent occurrence. In some cases the illness appears several times in the year, in others at only particular seasons of the year. I know at Fribourg an old lady who for thirty years past has regularly presented herself at the door of the asylum. At her own request they place her in confinement; then the unhappy woman every night passes through the terrible scenes of the French Revolution, of which she was a witness in her youth. She trembles in the hands of the executioner; she fancies herself drenched with the blood of the victims; she weeps and cries aloud incessantly. In the course of a few weeks the mind returns to its wonted seat, and she is restored to liberty with the full expectation that she will return again in a year.

"The Count of Nideck is suffering from a similar attack," I said; "unknown chains unite his fate with that of the Black Plague. Who can tell?" thought I; "that woman once was young, perhaps beautiful!"

And my imagination, once launched, carried me into the interesting regions of romance; but I was careful to tell no one what I thought. If I had opened out those conjectures to Sperver he would never have forgiven me for imagining that there could have been any intimacy between his master and the Black Plague; and as for Mademoiselle Odile, I dared not suggest insanity to her.

The poor young lady was evidently most unhappy. Her refusal to marry had so embittered the count against her that he could scarcely endure to have her in his presence. He bitterly reproached her with her ingratitude and disobedience, and expiated upon the cruelty of ungrateful

children. Sometimes even violent curses followed his daughter's visits. Things at last were so bad that I thought myself obliged to interfere. I, therefore, waited one evening on the countess in the antechamber, and entreated her to relinquish her personal attendance upon her father. But here arose, contrary to all expectations, quite an unforeseen obstacle. In spite of all my entreaties, she steadily insisted on watching by her father, and nursing him as she had done hitherto.

"It is my duty," she repeated, "and no arguments will shake my purpose," she said firmly.

"Madam," I replied, as a last effort, "the medical profession, too, has its duties, and an honorable man must fulfill them even to harshness and cruelty; your presence is killing your father."

I shall remember all my life the sudden change in the expression of the face of Odile.

My solemn words of warning seemed to cause the blood to flow back to the heart; her face became white as marble, and her large blue eyes, fixed steadily upon mine, seemed to read into the most secret recesses of my soul.

"Is that possible, sir?" she stammered; "upon your honor, do you declare this? Tell me truly!"

"Yes, madam, upon my honor."

There was a long and painful silence, only broken at last by these words in a low voice:

"Let God's will be done!"

And with downcast eyes she withdrew.

The day after this scene, about eight in the morning, I was pacing up and down in Hugh Lupus's tower, thinking of the count's illness, of which I could not foretell the issue —and I was thinking too of my patients at Fribourg, whom I might lose by too prolonged an absence—when three discreet taps upon my door turned my thoughts into another channel.

"Come in!"

The door opened, and Marie Lagoutte stood within, dropping me a low courtesy.

This old dame's visit put me out, and I was going to beg her to postpone her visit, when something mysterious in her countenance caught my attention. She had thrown over her shoulders a red-and-green shawl; she was biting her lips, with her head down, and as soon as she had closed the door she opened it again, and peeped out, to make sure that no one had followed her.

"What does she want with me?" I thought; "what is the meaning of all these precautions?"

And I was quite puzzled.

"Monsieur le docteur," said the worthy lady, advancing towards me, "I beg your pardon for disturbing you so early in the morning, but I have a very serious thing to tell you."

"Pray tell me all about it, then."

"It is the count."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir; you know that I sat up with him last night."

"I know. Pray sit down."

She sat before me in a great armchair, and I could not help noticing the energetic character of her head, which on the evening of my arrival at the castle had only seemed to me grotesque.

"Doctor," she resumed, after a short pause, and with her dark eyes upon me, "you know I am not timid or easily frightened. I have seen so many dreadful things in the course of my life that I am astonished at nothing now. When you have seen Marengo, Austerlitz, and Moscow, there is nothing left that can put you out."

"I am sure of that, ma'am."

"I don't want to boast, that is not my reason for telling you this; but it is to show you that I am not an escaped lunatic, and that you may believe me when I tell you what I say I have seen."

This was becoming interesting.

"Well," the good woman resumed, "last night, between nine and ten, just as I was going to bed, Offenloch came in and said to me, 'Marie, you will have to sit up with the

count to-night.' At first I felt surprised. 'What! is not mademoiselle going to sit up?' 'No, mademoiselle is poorly, and you will have to take her place.' Poor girl, she is ill! I knew that would be the end of it, I told her so a hundred times; but it is always so. Young people won't believe those who are older; and then, it is her father. So I took my knitting, said good-night to Tobias, and went into monseigneur's room. Sperver was there waiting for me, and went to bed; so there I was, all alone."

Here the good woman stopped a moment, indulged in a pinch of snuff, and tried to arrange her thoughts. I listened with eager attention for what was coming.

"About half-past ten," she went on, "I was sitting near the bed, and from time to time drew the curtain to see what the count was doing; he made no movement; he was sleeping as quietly as a child. It was all right until eleven o'clock, then I began to feel tired. An old woman, sir, cannot help herself—she must drop off to sleep in spite of everything. I did not think anything was going to happen, and I said to myself, 'He is sure to sleep till daylight.' About twelve the wind went down; the big windows had been rattling, but now they were quiet. I got up to see if anything was stirring outside. It was all as black as ink; so I came back to my armchair. I took another look at the patient; I saw that he had not stirred an inch, and I took up my knitting; but in a few minutes more I began nodding, nodding, and I dropped right off to sleep. I could not help it; the armchair was so soft and the room was so warm, who could have helped it? I had been asleep an hour, I suppose, when a sharp current of wind woke me up. I opened my eyes, and what do you think I saw? The tall middle window was wide open, the curtains were drawn, and there in the opening stood the count in his white night-dress, right on the window-sill."

"The count?"

"Yes."

"Nay, it is impossible; he cannot move!"

"So I thought too; that is just how I saw him. He

was standing with a torch in his hand; the night was so dark and the air so still that the flame stood up quite straight."

I gazed upon Marie Anne with astonishment.

"First of all," she said, after a moment's silence, "to see that long, thin man standing there with his bare legs, I can assure you it had such an effect upon me! I wanted to scream; but then I thought, 'Perhaps he is walking in his sleep; if I shout he will wake up, he will jump down, and then——' So I did not say a word, but I stared and stared, till I saw him lift up his torch in the air over his head, then he lowered it, then up again and down again, and he did this three times, just like a man making signals; then he threw it down upon the ramparts, shut the window, drew the curtains, passed before me without speaking, and got into bed, muttering some words I could not make out."

"Are you sure you saw all that, ma'am?"

"Quite sure."

"Well, it's strange."

"I know it is; but it is true. Ah! it did astonish me at first, and then when I saw him get into bed again and cross his hands over his breast, just as if nothing had happened, I said to myself, 'Marie Anne, you have had a bad dream; it cannot be true'; and so I went to the window, and there I saw the torch still burning; it had fallen into a bush near the third gate, and there it was shining just like a spark of fire. There was no denying it."

Marie Lagoutte looked at me a few moments without speaking.

"You may be sure, doctor, that after that I had no more sleep; I sat watching and ready for anything. Every moment I fancied I could hear something behind the arm-chair. I was not afraid—it was not that—but I was uneasy and restless. When morning came, very early I ran and woke Offenloch, and sent him to the count. Passing down the corridor I noticed that there was no torch in the first ring, and I came down and found it near the narrow path to the Schwartzwald; there it is!"

And the good woman took from under her apron the end of a torch, which she threw upon the table.

I was confounded.

How had that man, whom I had seen the night before feeble and exhausted, been able to rise, walk, lift up, and close down that heavy window? What was the meaning of that signal by night? I seemed to myself to witness this strange, mysterious scene, and my thoughts went off at once to the Black Plague. When I aroused myself from this contemplation of my own thoughts, I saw Marie Lagoutte rising and preparing to go.

"You have done quite right," I said as I took her to the door, "to tell me of these things, and I am much obliged to you. Have you told anyone else of this adventure?"

"No one, sir; such things are only to be told to the priest and the doctor."

"Come, I see you are a very wise, sensible woman."

These words were exchanged at the door of my tower. At this moment Sperver appeared at the end of the gallery, followed by his friend Sébalt.

"Fritz!" he shouted, "I have got news to tell you."

"Oh, come!" thought I, "more news! This is a strange condition of things."

Marie Lagoutte had disappeared, and the huntsman and his friend entered the tower.

VIII

On the countenance of Sperver was an expression of suppressed wrath, on that of his companion, bitter irony. This worthy sportsman, whose woeful physiognomy had struck me on my first arrival at Nideck, was as thin and dry as a lath. His hunting-jacket was girded tightly about him by his belt, from which hung a hunting-knife with a horn handle; long leathern gaiters came above his knees; the horn went over his shoulder from right to left, the wide-expanding opening under his arm; on his head a wide-

brimmed hat, with a heron's plume in the buckle. His profile, coming to a point in a reddish tuft, looked not unlike a goat's.

"Yes," cried Sperver, "I have got strange things to tell you."

He threw himself in a chair, seizing his head between his clenched hands, while dismal Sébalt calmly drew his horn over his head and laid it on the table.

"Now, Sébalt," cried Gideon, "speak out."

"The witch is hanging about the castle."

This piece of intelligence would have failed to interest me before seeing Marie Lagoutte, but now it struck me forcibly. There certainly was some mysterious connection between the lord of Nideck and that old woman. I knew nothing of the nature of this connection, and I felt that, at whatever cost, I must know it.

"Just wait a moment, friends," said I to Sperver and his comrade. "I want to know, first of all, where does this Black Pest come from?"

Sperver stared at me with astonishment.

"Come from? Who can tell that?"

"Very well, you can't. But when does she come within sight of Nideck?"

"As I told you, ten days before Christmas, at the same time every year."

"And how long does she stay?"

"A fortnight or three weeks."

"Is she ever seen before? not even on her way? nor after?"

"No."

"Then we shall have to catch her, seize upon her," I cried. "This is contrary to nature. We must find out where she comes from, what she wants here, what she is."

"Lay hold of her!" exclaimed Sperver; "seize her! Do you mean it?" and he shook his head. "Fritz, your advice is good enough in its way, but it is easier said than done. I could very easily send a bullet after her, almost at any time, but the count won't consent to that measure;

and as for catching her in any other way than by powder and shot, why, you had better go first and catch a squirrel by the tail! Listen to Sébalt's story, and you shall judge for yourself."

The master of the hounds, sitting on the table with his long legs crossed, fixed his eyes mournfully upon me, and began his tale.

"This morning, as I was coming down from the Altenberg, I followed the hollow road to Nideck. The snow filled it up entirely. I was going on my way, thinking of nothing particular, when I noticed a foot-track; it was deep down, and went across the road. The person had come down the bank and gone up on the other side. It was not a soft hare's foot, which hardly leaves an impression, it was not forked like a wild boar's track, it was not like a cloven hoof, such as the wolf's—it was a deep hole. I stopped and stooped down, and cleared away the loose snow that fell round, and came upon the very track of the Black Pest!"

"Are you sure it was that?"

"Of course I am. I know the old woman by her foot better than by her figure, for I always go, sir, with my eyes on the ground. I know everybody by their tracks; and as for this one, a child might know it."

"What, then, distinguishes this foot so particularly?"

"It is so small that you could cover it with your hand; it is finely shaped, the heel is rather long, the outline clean, the great toe lies close to the other toes, and they are all as fine as if they were in a lady's slipper. It is a lovely foot. Twenty years ago I should have fallen in love with a foot like that. Whenever I come across it, it has such an effect upon me! No one would believe that such a foot could belong to the Black Plague."

And the poor fellow, joining his hands together, contemplated the stone floor with doleful eyes.

"Well, Sébalt, what next?" asked Sperver impatiently.

"Ah, yes, to be sure! Well, I recognized that track and started off in pursuit. I was hoping to catch the creature

in her lair, but I will tell you the way she took me. I climbed up the bank by the roadside, only two gunshots from Nideck. I go along the hill, keeping the track on my right; it led along the side of the wood in the Rhéthal. All at once it jumps over the ditch into the wood. I stuck to it, but, happening to look a little to my left, I saw another track which had been following the Black Plague. I stopped short; was it Sperver's? or Kasper Trumpf's? or whose? I came to it, and you may fancy how astounded I was when I saw that it was nobody from our place! I know every foot in the Schwartzwald from Fribourg to Nideck. That foot was like none of ours. It must have come from a distance. The boot—for it was a kind of well-made, soft gentleman's boot, with spurs, which leave a little print behind them—the boot was not round at the toes, but square. The sole was thin, and bent with every step, and it had no nails in it. The walk was rapid, and the short steps were like those of a young man of twenty to five-and-twenty. I noticed the stitches in the side leather at once, and I think I never saw finer."

"Who can this be?" Sperver exclaimed.

Sébalt raised his shoulders and extended his hands, but said nothing.

"Who can have any object in following the old woman?" I asked Sperver.

"No one on earth can tell," was the reply.

And so we sat a few minutes, meditating over what we had heard.

At last he went on again with his narrative:

"I kept following the track; it went up the next ridge through the pine-forest. When it doubled round the Roche Fendue I said to myself, 'Ah, you accursed plague! if there was much game of your sort there would not be much sport; it would be preferable to work like a nigger!' So we all three arrive—the two tracks and I—at the top of the Schneeberg. There the wind had been blowing hard; the snow was knee-deep—but no matter! I must get on! I got to the edge of the torrent of the Steinbach, and there I

lost the track. I halted, and I saw that after trying up and down in several directions, the gentleman's boots had gone down the Tiefenbach. That was a bad sign. I looked along the other side of the torrent, but there was no appearance of a track there—none at all! The old hag had paddled up and down the stream to throw anyone off the scent who should try to follow her. Where was I to go to? —right, or left, or straight on? Not knowing, I came back to Nideck."

"You haven't told us about her breakfast," said Sperver.

"No, I was forgetting. At the foot of Roche Fendue I saw there had been a fire; there was a black place; I laid my hand upon it, thinking it might be warm, which would have proved that the Black Plague had not gone far; but it was as cold as ice. Close by I saw a wire trap in the bushes. It seems that the creature knows how to snare game. A hare had been caught in it; the print of its body was still plain, lying flat in the snow. The witch had lighted the fire to cook it; she had had a good breakfast, I'll be bound."

At this Sperver cried indignantly:

"Just fancy that old witch living on meat, while so many honest folks in our villages have nothing better than potatoes to eat! That's what upsets me, Fritz! Ah! if I had but——"

But his thoughts remained untold; he turned deadly pale, and all three of us, in a moment, stood rigid and motionless, staring with horror at each other's ghastly countenance.

A yell—the howling cry of the wolf in the long, cold days of winter—the cry which none can imagine who has not heard the most fearful and harrowing of all bestial sounds—that fearful cry was echoing through the castle not far from us! It rose up the spiral staircase, it filled the massive building as if the hungry, savage beast was at our door!

Travelers speak of the deep roar of the lion troubling the silence of the night amidst the rocky deserts of Africa; but while the tropical regions, sultry and baked, resound with the vibrations of the mighty voice of the savage mon-

arch of the desert, making the air tremble with the distant thunder of his awful cry, the vast snowy deserts of the North, too, have their characteristic cry—a strange, lamentable yell that seems to suit the character of the dreary winter scene. That voice of the Northern desert is the howl of the wolf.

The instant after this awful sound had broken upon the silence followed another formidable body of discordant sounds—the baying and yelling of sixty hounds—answering from the ramparts of Nideck. The whole pack gave voice at the same moment—the deep bay of the bloodhound, the sharp cry of the pointer, the plaintive yelpings of the spaniels, and the melancholy howl of the mastiffs, all mingling in confusion with the rattling of dog-chains, the shaking of the kennels, under the struggles of the hounds to get loose; and, dominating over all, the long, dismal, prolonged note of the wolf's monotonous howl; his was the leading part in this horrible canine concert!

Sperver sprang from his seat and ran out upon the platform to see if a wolf had dropped into the moat. But no—the howling came from nearer. Then turning to us he cried:

"Fritz! Sébalt!—come, come quickly!"

We flew down the steps four at a time and rushed into the fencing-school. Here we heard the cry of the wolf alone, prolonged beneath the echoing arches; the distant barking and yelling of the pack became almost inaudible in the distance; the dogs were hoarse with rage and excitement, their chains were getting entangled together. Perhaps they were strangling each other.

Sperver drew the keen blade of his hunting-knife. Sébalt did the same; they preceded me down the gallery.

Then the fearful sounds became our guide to the sick man's room. Sperver spoke no more; he hurried forward. Sébalt stretched his long legs. I felt a shuddering horror creep through my whole frame—a horrible presentiment of something shocking and abominable came over us.

As we approached the apartments of the count we met the

whole household afoot—the gamekeepers, the huntsmen, the kennel-keepers, the scullions, were all mingled and jostling each other, asking:

"What is the matter? Where are those cries coming from?"

Without stopping we ran into the passage which led into the count's bedroom, where we met poor Marie Lagoutte, who alone had had the courage to penetrate thither before us. She was holding in her arms the young countess, who had fainted, her head falling back, her hair flowing down behind her; she was carrying her away as fast as she could.

We passed her so rapidly that we scarcely had time to witness this sad sight. But it has since returned to my memory, and the pale face of Odile lying on the ample shoulders of the good servant still makes a vivid impression upon my memory, resembling the poor lamb presenting its throat to the knife without a complaint, dying with fear before the stroke falls.

At last we had reached the count's chamber.

The howling came from behind his door.

We stole fearful glances at one another without attempting to account for the hideous noise, or explaining the presence of such a wild guest in the house. Indeed, we had no time; our ideas were in dire and utter confusion.

Sperver hastily pushed the door open, and, knife in hand, was darting into the room; but he stood arrested on the threshold motionless as a stone.

Never have I seen such a picture of horror as he displayed standing rooted there, with his eyes starting from his head, and his mouth wide open and gasping for breath.

I gazed over his shoulder, and the sight that met my eyes made the blood run chill as snow in my veins.

The lord of Nideck, crouching on all fours upon his bed, with his arms bending forward, his head carried low, his eyes glaring with fierce fires, was uttering loud, protracted howlings!

He was the wolf!

That low receding forehead, that sharp-pointed face, that foxy-looking beard, bristling off both cheeks; the long meager figure, the sinewy limbs, the face, the cry, the attitude, declared the presence of the wild beast, half-hidden, half-revealed, under a human mask!

At times he would stop for a second and listen attentively with head awry, and then the crimson hangings would tremble with the quivering of his limbs, like foliage shaken by the wind; then the melancholy wail would open afresh.

Sperver, Sébalt, and I, stood nailed to the floor; we held our breath, petrified with fear.

Suddenly the count stopped. As a wild beast scents the wind, he lifted his head and listened again.

There, there, far away, down among the thick fir-forests, whitened with dense patches of snow, a cry was heard in reply—weak at first; then the sound rose and swelled in a long protracted howl, drowning the feebler efforts of the hounds: it was the she-wolf answering the wolf!

Sperver, turning round awe-stricken, his countenance pale as ashes, pointed to the mountain, and murmured low:

"Listen—there's the witch!"

And the count still crouching motionless, but with his head now raised in the attitude of attention, his neck outstretched, his eyes burning, seemed to understand the meaning of that distant voice, lost amidst the passes and peaks of the Schwartzwald, and a kind of fearful joy gleamed in his savage features.

At this moment, Sperver, unable or unwilling to restrain himself any longer, cried in a voice broken with emotion:

"Count of Nideck—what are you doing?"

The count fell back thunderstruck. We rushed into the room to his help. It was time. The third attack had commenced, and it was terrible to witness!

IX

The lord of Nideck was in a dying state.

What can science do in presence of the great mortal strife between Death and Life? At the supreme hour, when the invisible wrestlers are writhed together body to body, and limb to limb, panting, each in turn overthrowing and overthrown, what avails the healing art? One can but watch, and tremble, and listen!

At times the struggle seems suspended—a truce has sounded; Life has retired into her hold. She is resting; she is collecting the courage of despair. But the relentless enemy beats at the gates; he bursts in; then Life springs to the rescue, and again grapples with her adversary. The strife is renewed with fresh fuel added to the fire of mortal energy as the fatal issue draws closer and nearer.

And the exhausted patient, himself the field of battle, weltering in the cold sweat of death, the eye set and the arm powerless, can do nothing for himself. His breathing, sometimes short, broken, and distressing, sometimes long, deep, labored, and heavy, indicates the varying phases of this dreadful struggle.

The bystanders watch each other's faces, and they think, "The day will come when we in our turns shall be the field of the same strife, and victorious Death will bear us away into the grave, his den, as the spider carries away the fly." But the true life, the only life, the soul, spreading her immortal wings, will speed her flight to another world, with the exulting cry, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith!" And Death, disappointed of its prey, will look up at the emancipated being, unable to follow, and holding in its clutches only a cold and decaying corpse, soon to be a handful of dust. "Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy victory?" Oh, best and only consolation, the hope and belief in the final triumph of justice, the certainty of immortal life through Jesus Christ the Savior! Cruel, indeed,

is he who would rob man of the chief brightness and glory of life!

Towards midnight the Count of Nideck seemed almost gone; the agony of death was at hand; the broken, weakened pulse indicated the sinking of the vital powers; then it might return to a more active state; but there seemed no hope.

My only duty left was to stay and see this unhappy man die.

I was exhausted with fatigue and anxiety; whatever art could do I had tried.

I told Sperver to sit up, and close his master's eyes in death. The poor, faithful fellow was in the utmost distress; he reproached himself with his involuntary cry—"Count of Nideck—what are you doing?" and tore his hair in bitter repentance.

I went away alone to Hugh Lupus's tower, having had scarcely any time to take food, but I did not feel the want of it.

There was a bright fire on the hearth; I threw myself dressed upon the bed, and sleep soon came to relieve my weight of apprehension—that heavy sleep broken by the consciousness that you may any minute be awakened by tears and lamentations.

I was sleeping thus, with my face turned towards the fire, and as it often happens, the flame fitfully rising and falling threw a fluttering, flickering light, like those of ruddy flapping wings against the walls, and wearied still more my drooping eyelids.

Lost in a dreamy slumber, I was half opening my eyes to see the cause of these alternate lights and shadows, but the strangest sight surprised me.

Close by the hearth, hardly revealed by the feeble light of a few dying embers, I recognized with dismay the dark profile of the Black Plague!

She sat upon a low stool, and was evidently warming herself.

At first I thought myself deceived by my senses, which

would have been natural enough after the exciting scenes of the last few days; I raised myself upon my elbow, gazing with my eyes starting with fear and horror.

It was she indeed! I lay horrified, for there she sat calm and immovable, with her hands clasped over her skinny knees, just as I had seen her in the snow, with her long scraggy neck outstretched, her hooked nose, her compressed lips.

How had the Black Pest got here? How had she found her way into this high tower crowning the dangerous precipices? Everything that Sperver had told me of this mysterious being seemed to be coming true! And now the unaccountable behavior of Lieverlé, growling so fiercely against the wall, seemed clear as the daylight. I huddled myself close up into the alcove, hardly daring to breathe, and staring upon this motionless profile just as a mouse out of its hole fixes its paralyzed stare upon the cat that is watching for it.

The old woman stirred no more than the rock-hewn pillars on each side of the hearthstone, and her lips were mumbling inarticulate sounds.

My heart was palpitating, my fears increased momentarily during the long silence, made more startling by the motionless, supernatural figure that sat there before me.

This had lasted a quarter of an hour when, the fire catching a splinter of fir-wood, a flash of light broke out, the shaving twisted and flamed, and a few rays of light flared to the end of the room.

That luminous jet was sufficient to show me that the creature was clothed in an old dress of rich purple silk as stiff as cardboard, with a violet pattern; there was a massive bracelet upon her left wrist, and a gold arrow stuck through her thick gray hair, twisted over the back of her head. It was like an apparition out of the ages past.

Still the Plague could have had no hostile intentions towards me, or she might easily have taken advantage of my sleep to have put them in execution.

That thought was beginning to give me some confidence,

when suddenly she rose from her seat and with slow steps approached my bed, holding in her hand a torch which she had just lighted. I then observed that her eyes were fixed and haggard.

I made an effort to rise and cry aloud, but not a muscle of my body would obey my wishes, not a breath came to my lips; and the old woman, bending over me between the curtains, fixed her stony stare upon me with a strange, unearthly smile. I wanted to call for help, I wanted to drive her from me, but her petrifying stare seemed to fascinate and paralyze me, just as that of the serpent fixes the little bird motionless before it.

During this speechless contemplation minutes seemed like hours. What was she about to do? I was ready for any event.

Suddenly she turned her head, went round upon her heel, listened, strode across the room, and opened the door.

At last I recovered a little courage; an effort of the will brought me to my feet as if I were acted on by a spring; I darted after her footsteps; she with one hand was holding her torch on high, and with the other kept the door open.

I was about to seize her by the hair, when at the end of the long gallery, under the Gothic archway of the castle, leading to the ramparts, I saw—a tall figure.

It was the Count of Nideck!

The Count of Nideck, whom I had thought a dying man, clad in a huge wolf-skin thrown with its upper jaw projecting grimly over his eyes like a visor, the formidable claws hanging over each shoulder, and the tail dragging behind him along the flags.

He wore stout, heavy shoes, a silver clasp gathered the wolf-skin round his neck, and his whole aspect, but for the ice-cold deathly expression of his face, proclaimed the man born for command—the master!

In the presence of such an imposing personage my ideas became vague and confused. Flight was no longer possible, yet I had the presence of mind to throw myself into the embrasure of the window.

The count entered my room with his eyes fixed on the old woman and his features relaxed. They spoke to one another in hoarse whispers, so low that I could not distinguish a word. But there was no mistaking their gestures. The woman was pointing to the bed.

They approached the fireplace on tiptoe. There in the dark shadow of the recess, at its side, the Black Plague, with a horrible smile, unrolled a large bag.

As soon as the count saw the bag he made a bound towards the bed and knelt upon it with one knee; there was a shaking of the curtains, his body disappeared beneath their folds, and I could only see one leg still resting on the floor, and the wolf's tail undulating irregularly from side to side.

They seemed to be acting a murder in ghastly pantomime. No real scene, however frightful, could have agitated me more than this mute representation of some horrible deed.

Then the old woman ran to his assistance, carrying the bag with her. Again the curtains shook and the shadows crossed the walls; but the most horrible of all was that I fancied I saw a pool of blood creeping across the floor and slowly reaching the hearth. But it was only the snow that had clung to the count's boots, and was melting in the heat.

I was still gazing upon this dark stream, feeling my dry tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, when there was a great movement; the old woman and the count were stuffing the sheets of the bed into the sack, they were thrusting and stamping them in with just the same haste as a dog scratching at a hole, then the lord of Nideck flung this unshapely bundle over his shoulder and made for the door; a sheet was dragging behind him, and the old woman followed him, torch in hand. They went across the court.

My knees were almost giving way under me; they knocked together for fear. I prayed for strength.

In a couple of minutes I was on their footsteps, dragged forward by a sudden irresistible impulse.

I crossed the court at a run, and was just going to enter the door of the tower, when I perceived a deep but narrow

pit at my feet, down which went a winding staircase, and there far below I could see the torch describing a spiral course around the stone rail like a little star; at last it was lost in the distance.

Now I also descended the first steps of this newly-discovered staircase, directing my course after this distant light; suddenly it vanished. The old woman and the count had reached the bottom of the precipice. Supported by the stone rail I continued my descent, safe to be able to mount again if I found my further progress stopped.

Soon I came to the last step; I looked around me, and discovered on my left hand a narrow streak of moonlight shining under a low door, through the nettles and brambles; I kicked a way through these obstacles, clearing the snow away with my feet, and then found that I was at the very foot of the keep—Hugh's donjon tower.

Who would have supposed that such a hole would have led into the castle? Who had shown it to the old woman? I did not stay to satisfy myself on these points.

The vast plain lay spread before me bathed in a light almost equal to that of day. On the right lay extended wide the dark line of the Black Forest with its craggy rocks, its gullies, its passes stretching away as far as the sight could reach.

The night air was keen and sharp, but perfectly calm, and I felt myself awakened to the highest degree, almost as if my senses were volatilized by the still and ice-cold air.

My first examination of the horizon was for the figures of the count and his strange companion. I soon distinguished their tall dark forms, standing out sharply against the star-spangled purple heavens. I nearly overtook them at the bottom of the ravine.

The count was moving with deliberate steps, the imaginary winding-sheet dragging slowly after him. There was an automatic precision in the movements of both.

I kept six or eight yards behind them down the hollow road to the Altenberg, now in the shade, now in the full light, for the moon was shining with astonishing brilliancy.

A few clouds floated idly across the zenith, seeming to want to clasp her in their long arms, but she ever eluded their grasp, and her rays, keen as a blade of steel, cut me to the marrow of my bones.

I could have wished to turn back, but some invisible power impelled me onwards to follow this funeral procession in pantomime. Even to this day I fancy still I can see the rough mountain path through the Black Forest, I can hear the crisp snow crackling underfoot, and the dead leaves rustling in the light north wind; I can see myself following those two silent beings, but I cannot understand what mysterious power drew me in their footsteps.

At last we reach the forest, and advance amongst the tall bare-branched beeches; the dark shadows of their higher boughs intersect the lower branches, and fall broken upon the snow-encumbered road. Sometimes I fancy I can hear steps behind me; I turn sharply round, but can see no one.

We had just reached the long rocky ridge that forms the crest of the Altenberg; behind it flows the torrent of the Schneeberg, but in winter no current is visible; scarcely does a mere thread of its blue waters trickle under the thick crust of ice. Here the deep solitude is broken by no murmuring brooks, no warblings of birds, no thunder of the waterfall. In the vast unbroken solitudes the awful silence is terrible.

The Count of Nideck and the old woman found a gap in the face of the rock, up which they mounted straight with marvelous celerity; whilst I had to pull myself up by the help of the bushes.

Hardly had they reached the ridge of the crags, which came almost to a point, when I was within three yards of them, and I beheld beyond a dreadful precipice, of which I could not see the bottom. At the left, hung in the air like a vast sheet, the fall of the Schneeberg, a mass of ice. That resemblance to an immense wave taking the precipice at one bound, bearing trees on its breast, fringed with the bushes, and winding out the long ivy sprays, which exhibit in their delicate tracery the form of the rigid glassy billow;

that mere semblance of movement amidst the stillness and immovableness of death, and the presence of those two speechless creatures, pursuing their ghastly work with automatic precision, added to the terror with which I already trembled.

Nature herself seemed to shrink with horror.

The count had laid down his burden; the old woman and he took it up together, swung it for a moment over the edge of the precipice, then the long shroud floated over the abyss, and the imaginary murderers in silence bent forward to see it fall.

That long white sheet floating in the air is still present before my eyes. It descends, it falls like a wild swan shot in the clouds, spreading its wide wings, the long neck thrown back, whirling down to earth to die.

The white burden disappeared in the dark depths of the precipice.

At last the cloud which I had long seen threatening to cover the moon's bright disc veiled her in its steel-blue folds, and her rays ceased to shine.

The old woman, holding the count by the hand, and dragging him forward with hurried steps, came for a moment into view.

The cloud had overshadowed the moon, and I could not move out of their way without danger of falling over the precipice.

After a few minutes, during which I lay as close as I could, there was a rift in the cloud. I looked out again. I stood alone on the point of the peak with the snow up to my knees.

Full of horror and apprehension, I descended from my perilous position, and ran to the castle in as much consternation as if I had been guilty of some great crime.

As for the lord of Nideck and his companion, I lost sight of them.

X

I WANDERED around the castle of Nideck unable to find the exit from which I had commenced my melancholy journey.

So much anxiety and uneasiness were beginning to tell upon my mind; I staggered on, wondering if I was not mad, unable to believe in what I had seen, and yet alarmed at the clearness of my own perceptions.

My mind in confusion passed in review that strange man waving his torch overhead in the darkness, howling like a wolf, coldly and accurately going through all the details of an imaginary murder without the omission of one ghastly detail or circumstance, then escaping and committing to the furious torrent the secret of his crime; these things all harassed my mind, hurried confusedly past my eyes, and made me feel as if I were laboring under a nightmare.

Lost in the snow, I ran to and fro panting and alarmed, and unable to judge which way to direct my steps.

As day drew near the cold became sharper; I shivered, I execrated Sperver for having brought me from Fribourg to bear a part in this hideous adventure.

At last, exhausted, my beard a mass of ice, my ears nearly frostbitten, I discovered the gate and rang the bell with all my might.

It was then about four in the morning. Knapwurst made me wait a terribly long time. His little lodge, cut in the rock, remained silent; I thought the little hunchbacked wretch would never have done dressing; for of course I supposed he would be in bed asleep.

I rang again.

This time his grotesque figure appeared abruptly, and he cried to me from the door in a fury:

"Who are you?"

"I?—Doctor Fritz."

"Oh, that alters the case," and he went back into his lodge for a lantern, crossed the outer court where the snow

came up to his middle, and staring at me through the grating, he exclaimed:

"I beg your pardon, Doctor Fritz; I thought you would be asleep up there in Hugh Lupus's tower. Were *you* ringing? Now that explains why Sperver came to me about midnight to ask if anybody had gone out. I said no, which was quite true, for I never saw you going out."

"But pray, Monsieur Knapwurst, do for pity's sake let me in, and I will tell you all about that, by and by."

"Come, come, sir, a little patience."

And the hunchback, with the slowest deliberation, undid the padlock and slipped the bars, whilst my teeth were chattering, and I stood shivering from head to foot.

"You are very cold, doctor," said the diminutive man, "and you cannot get into the castle. Sperver has fastened the inside door, I don't know why; he does not usually do so; the outer gate is enough. Come in here and get warm. You won't find my little hole very inviting, though. It is nothing but a sty, but when a man is as cold as you are, he is not apt to be particular."

Without replying to his chatter, I followed him in as quickly as I could.

We went into the hut, and in spite of my complete state of numbness, I could not help admiring the state of picturesque disorder in which I found the place. The slate roof leaning against the rock, and resting by its other side on a wall not more than six feet high, showed the smoky, blackened rafters from end to end.

The whole edifice consisted of but one apartment, furnished with a very uninviting bed, which the dwarf did not often take the trouble to make, and two small windows with hexagonal panes, weather-stained with the rainbow tints of mother-of-pearl. A large square table filled up the middle, and it would be difficult to account for that massive oak slab being got in, unless by supposing it to have been there before the hut was built.

On shelves against the walls were rolls of parchment, and

old books great and small. Wide open on the table lay a fine black-letter volume, with illuminations, bound in vellum, clasped and cornered with silver, apparently a collection of old chronicles. Besides there was nothing but two leathern armchairs, bearing on them the unmistakable impression of the misshapen figure of this learned gentleman.

I need not stay to do more than mention the pens, the jar of tobacco, five or six pipes, lying here and there, and in a corner a small castiron stove, with its low, open door wide open, and throwing out now and then a volley of bright sparks; and to complete the picture, the cat arching her back, and spitting threateningly at me with her armed paw uplifted.

All this scene was tinted with that deep rich amber light in which the old Flemish painters delighted, and of which they alone possessed the secret, and never left it to the generations after them.

"So you went out last night, doctor?" inquired my host, after we had both installed ourselves, and while I had my hands in a warm place upon the stove.

"Yes, pretty early," I answered. "I had to look after a patient."

This brief explanation seemed to satisfy the little hunchback, and he lighted his blackened boxwood pipe, which was hanging over his chin.

"You don't smoke, doctor?"

"I beg your pardon, I do."

"Well, fill any one of these pipes. I was here," he said, spreading his yellow hand over the open volume. "I was reading the chronicles of Hertzog when you came."

"Ah, that accounts for the time I had to wait! Of course you stayed to finish the chapter?" I said, smiling.

He owned it, grinning, and we both laughed together.

"But if I had known it was you," he said, "I should have finished the chapter another time."

There was a short silence, during which I was observing the very peculiar physiognomy of this misshapen being—

those long deep wrinkles that moated in his wide mouth, his small eyes with the crow's feet at the outer corners, that contorted nose, bulbous at its end, and especially that huge double-storied forehead of his. The whole figure reminded me not a little of the received pictures of Socrates, and while warming myself and listening to the crackling of the fire, I went off into contemplations on the very diversified fortunes of mankind.

"Here is this dwarf," I thought, "an ill-shaped, stunted caricature, banished into a corner of Nideck, and living just like the cricket that chirps beneath the hearthstone. Here is this little Knapwurst, who in the midst of excitement, grand hunts, gallant trains of horsemen coming and going, the barking of the hounds, the trampling of the horses, and the shouts of the hunters, is living quietly all alone, buried in his books, and thinking of nothing but the times long gone by, whilst joy or sorrow, songs or tears, fill the world around him, while spring and summer, autumn and winter, come and look in through his dim windows, by turns brightening, warming, and benumbing the face of nature outside. Whilst men in the outer world are subject to the gentle influences of love, or the sterner impulses of avarice, hoping, coveting, longing, and desiring, he neither hopes, nor desires, nor covets anything. As long as he is smoking his pipe, with his eyes feasting on a musty parchment, he lives in the enjoyment of dreams, and he goes into raptures over things long, long ago gone by, or, which have never existed at all; it is all one to him. 'Hertzog says so and so, somebody else tells the tale a different way,' and he is perfectly happy! His leathery face gets more and more deeply wrinkled, his broken angular back bends into sharper angles and corners, his pointed elbows dig beds for themselves in the oak table, his skinny fingers bury themselves in his cheeks, his piggish gray eyes get redder over manuscripts, Latin, Greek, or mediæval. He falls into raptures, he smacks his lips, he licks his chops like a cat over a dainty dish, and then he throws himself upon that dirty litter, with his knees up to his chin, and he thinks he has had a delightful day! Oh,

Providence of God, is a man's duty best done, are his responsibilities best discharged, at the top or at the bottom of the scale of human life?"

But the snow was melting away from my legs, the balmy warmth of the stove was shedding a pleasant influence over my feelings, and I felt myself reviving in this mixed atmosphere of tobacco smoke and burning pinewood.

Knapwurst gravely laid his pipe on the table, and reverently spreading his hands upon the folio, said in a voice that seemed to issue from the bottom of his consciousness; or, if you like it better, from the bottom of a twenty-gallon cask:

"Doctor Fritz, here is the law and the prophets!"

"How so? what do you mean?"

"Parchment—old parchment—that is what I love! These old yellow, rusty, worm-eaten leaves are all that is left to us of the past, from the days of Charlemagne until this day. The oldest families disappear, the old parchments remain. Where would be the glory of the Hohenstauffens, the Leiningens, the Nidecks, and of so many other families of renown? Where would be the fame of their titles, their deeds of arms, their magnificent armor, their expeditions to the Holy Land, their alliances, their claims to remote antiquity, their conquests once complete, now long ago annulled? Where would be all those grand claims to historic fame without these parchments? Nowhere at all. Those high and mighty barons, those great dukes and princes, would be as if they had never been—they and everything that related to them far and near. Their strong castles, their palaces, their fortresses fall and molder away into masses of ruin, vague remembrancers! Of all that greatness, one monument alone remains—the chronicles, the songs of bards and minnesingers. Parchment alone remains!"

He sat silent for a moment, and then pursued his reflections:

"And in those distant times, while knights and squires rode out to war, and fought and conquered, or fought and

fell, over the possession of a nook in a forest, or a title, or a smaller matter still, with what scorn and contempt did they not look down upon the wretched little scribbler, the man of mere letters and jargon, half clothed in untanned hides, his only weapon an inkhorn at his belt, his pennon the feather of a goosequill! How they laughed at him, calling him an atom, or a flea, good for nothing! 'He does nothing, he cannot even collect our taxes, or look after our estates, whilst we bold riders, armed to the teeth, sword in hand, and lance on thigh, we fight, and we are the finest fellows in the land!' So they said when they saw the poor devil dragging himself on foot after their horses' heels, shivering in winter and sweating in summer, rusting and decaying in old age. Well, what has happened? That flea, that vermin, has kept them in the memory of men longer than their castles stood, long after their arms and their armor had rusted in the ground. I love those old parchments. I respect and revere them. Like ivy, they clothe the ruins and keep the ancient walls from crumbling into dust and perishing in oblivion!"

Having thus delivered himself, a solemn expression stole over his features, and his own eloquence made the tears of moved affection steal down his furrowed cheeks.

The poor hunchback evidently loved those who had borne with and protected his unwarlike but clever ancestors. And after all he spoke truly, and there was profound good sense in his words.

I was surprised, and said, "Monsieur Knapwurst, do you know Latin?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, but without conceit, "both Latin and Greek. I taught myself. Old grammars were quite enough; there were some old books of the count's thrown by as rubbish; they fell into my hands, and I devoured them. A little while after the count, hearing me drop a Latin quotation, was quite astonished, and said, 'When did you learn Latin, Knapwurst?' 'I taught myself, monseigneur.' He asked me a few questions, to which I gave pretty good answers. '*Parbleu!*' he cried, 'Knapwurst

knows more than I do; he shall keep my records.' So he gave me the keys of the archives; that was thirty years ago. Since that time I have read every word. Sometimes, when the count sees me mounted upon my ladder, he says, 'What are you doing now, Knapwurst?' 'I am reading the family archives, monseigneur.' 'Aha! is that what you enjoy?' 'Yes, very much.' 'Come, come, I am glad to hear it, Knapwurst; but for you, who would know anything about the glory of the house of Nideck?' And off he goes laughing. I do just as I please."

"So he is a very good master, is he?"

"Oh, Doctor Fritz, he is the kindest-hearted master! he is so frank and so pleasant!" cried the dwarf, with hands clasped. "He has but one fault."

"And what may that be?"

"He has no ambition."

"How do you prove that?"

"Why, he might have been anything he pleased. Think of a Nideck, one of the very noblest families in Germany! He had but to ask to be made a minister or a field-marshal. Well! he desired nothing of the sort. When he was no longer a young man he retired from political life. Except that he was in the campaign in France, at the head of a regiment he raised at his own expense, he has always lived far away from noise and battle; plain and simple, and almost unknown, he seemed to think of nothing but his hunting."

These details were deeply interesting to me. The conversation was of its own accord taking just the turn I wished it to take, and I resolved to get my advantage out of it.

"So the count has never had any exciting deeds in hand?"

"None, Doctor Fritz, none whatever; and that is the pity. A noble excitement is the glory of great families. It is a misfortune for a noble race when a member of it is devoid of ambition; he allows his family to sink below its level. I could give you many examples. That which would

be very fortunate in a trader's family is the greatest misfortune in a nobleman's."

I was astonished; for all my theories upon the count's past life were falling to the earth.

"Still, Monsieur Knapwurst, the lord of Nideck has had great sorrows, has he not?"

"Such as what?"

"The loss of his wife."

"Yes, you are right there; his wife was an angel; he married her for love. She was a Zaân, one of the oldest and best nobility of Alsace, but a family ruined by the Revolution. The Countess Odile was the delight of her husband. She died of a decline which carried her off after five years' illness. Every plan was tried to save her life. They traveled in Italy together, but she returned worse than she went, and died a few weeks after their return. The count was almost broken-hearted, and for two years he shut himself up and would see no one. He neglected his hounds and his horses. Time at last calmed his grief, but there is always a remainder of grief," said the hunchback, pointing with his finger to his heart; "you understand very well, there is still a bleeding wound. Old wounds, you know, make themselves felt in change of weather—and old sorrows, too—in spring, when the flowers bloom again, and in autumn when the dead leaves cover the soil. But the count would not marry again; all his love is given to his daughter."

"So the marriage was a happy one throughout?"

"Happy! why, it was a blessing for everybody!"

I said no more. It was plain that the count had not committed, and could not have committed, a crime. I was obliged to yield to evidence. But then, what was the meaning of that scene at night, that strange connection with the Black Pest, that fearful acting, that remorse in a dream, which impelled the guilty to betray their past actrocities?

I lost myself in vain conjectures.

Knapwurst relighted his pipe, and handed me one, which I accepted.

By that time the icy numbness which had laid hold of me had nearly passed away, and I was enjoying that pleasant sense of relief which follows great fatigue, when by the chimney corner in a comfortable easy-chair, veiled in wreaths of tobacco smoke, you yield to the luxury of repose, and listen idly to the duet between the chirping of a cricket on the hearth and the hissing of the burning log.

So we sat for a quarter of an hour.

At last I ventured to remark:

"But sometimes the count gets angry with his daughter?"

Knapwurst started, and fixing a sinister, almost a fierce and hostile eye upon me, answered:

"I know, I know!"

I watched him narrowly, thinking I might learn something in support of my theory, but he simply added, ironically:

"The towers of Nideck are high, and slander flies too low to reach their elevation!"

"No doubt; but still it is a fact, is it not?"

"Oh, yes, so it is; but after all it is only a craze, an effect of his complaint. As soon as the crisis is past all his love for mademoiselle comes back. I assure you, sir, that a lover of twenty could not be more devoted, more affectionate, than he is. That young girl is his pride and his joy. A dozen times I have seen him riding away to get a dress, or flowers, or what not, for her. He went off alone, and brought back the articles in triumph, blowing his horn. He would have intrusted so delicate a commission to no one, not even Sperver, whom he is so fond of. Mademoiselle never dares express a wish in his hearing, lest he should start off and fulfill it at once. The lord of Nideck is the worthiest master, the tenderest father, and the kindest and most upright of men. Those poachers who are forever infesting our woods, the old Count Ludwig would have strung them up without mercy; our count winks at them; he even turns them into gamekeepers. Look at Sperver! Why, if Count Ludwig was alive, Sperver's bones would long ago have been rattling in chains; instead of which he is head huntsman at the castle."

All my theories were now in a state of disorganization. I laid my head between my hands and thought a long while.

Knapwurst, supposing that I was asleep, had turned to his folio again.

The gray dawn was now peeping in, and the lamp turning pale. Indistinct voices were audible in the castle.

Suddenly there was a noise of hurried steps outside. I saw someone pass before the window, the door opened abruptly, and Gideon appeared at the threshold.

XI

SPERVER's pale face and glowing eyes announced that events were on their way. Yet he was calm, and did not seem surprised at my presence in Knapwurst's room.

"Fritz," he said briefly, "I am come to fetch you." I rose without answering, and followed him.

Scarcely were we out of the hut when he took me by the arm and drew me on to the castle.

"Mademoiselle Odile wants to see you," he whispered.

"What! is she ill?"

"No, she is much better, but something or other that is strange is going on. This morning, about one o'clock, thinking that the count was nearly breathing his last, I went to wake the countess; with my hand on the bell my heart failed me. 'Why should I break her heart?' I said to myself. 'She will learn her misfortune only too soon; and then to wake her up in the middle of the night, weak and frail as she is, after such shocks, might kill her at a stroke.' I took a few minutes to consider, and then I resolved I would take it all on myself. I returned to the count's room. I looked in—not a soul was there! Impossible! the man was in the last agonies of death. I ran into the corridor like a madman. No one was there! Into the long gallery—no one! Then I lost my presence of mind, and rushing again into the young countess's room, I rang again. This time she appeared, crying out: 'Is my father dead?' 'No.' 'Has he disappeared?' 'Yes,

madam. I had gone out for a minute—when I came in again——' 'And Doctor Fritz, where is he?' 'In Hugh Lupus's tower.' 'In *that* tower?' She started. She threw a dressing gown around her, took her lamp, and went out. I stayed behind. A quarter of an hour after she came back, her feet covered with snow, and so pale and so cold! She set her lamp upon the chimneypiece, and looking at me fixedly, said: 'Was it you who put the doctor into that tower?' 'Yes, madam.' 'Unhappy man! you will never know the extent of the harm you have done.' I was about to answer, but she interrupted me: 'No more; go and fasten every door and lie down. I will sit up. To-morrow morning you will find Doctor Fritz at Knapwurst's, and bring him down to me. Make no noise, and mind, you have seen nothing and know nothing!'"

"Is that all, Sperver?" I asked.

He nodded gravely.

"And about the count?"

"He is in again. He is better."

We had got to the antechamber. Gideon knocked at the door gently, then he opened it, announcing:

"Doctor Fritz."

I took a pace forward, and stood in the presence of Odile. Sperver had retired, closing the door.

A strange impression crossed my mind at the sight of the young countess standing pale and still, leaning upon the back of an armchair, her eyes of feverish black velvet. But she stood calm and firm.

"Doctor," she said, motioning me to a chair, "pray sit down; I have a very serious matter to speak to you about."

I obeyed in silence.

In her turn she sat down and seemed to be collecting her thoughts.

"Providence or an evil destiny, I know not which, has made you witness of a mystery in which lies involved the honor of my family."

So she knew it all!

I sat confounded and astonished.

"Madam, believe me, it was but by chance——"

"It is useless," she interrupted: "I know it all, and it is frightful!"

Then in a heartrending, appealing voice, she cried: "My father is not a guilty man!"

I shuddered, and with hands outstretched, cried: "Madam, I know it; I know that the life of your father has been one of the noblest and loveliest."

Odile had half risen from her seat, as if to protest, by anticipation, against any supposition that might be injurious to her father. Hearing me, myself, taking up his defense, she sank back again, and covering her face with her hands, the tears began to flow.

"God bless you, sir!" she exclaimed. "I should have died with the very thought that a breath of suspicion was harbored against him."

"Ah, madam, who could possibly attach any reality to the action of a somnambulist?"

"That is quite true, sir; I had had that thought myself, but appearances—pardon me—yet I feared—still I knew Doctor Fritz was a man of honor."

"Pray, madam, be calm."

"No," she cried, "let me weep on. It is such a relief; for ten years I have suffered in secret. Oh, how I suffered! That secret, so long shut up in my breast, was killing me. I should soon have died, like my dear mother. God has had pity upon me, and has sent you, and made you share it with me. Let me tell you all, sir, do let me!"

She could speak no more. Sobs and tears broke her voice. So it always is with proud and lofty natures. After having conquered grief, and imprisoned it, buried, and, as it were, crushed down in the secret depths of the mind, they seem happy, or, at any rate, indifferent to the eyes of the uninformed around, and the eye of the most watchful observer might be mistaken; but let a sudden shock break the seal, an unexpected rending of a portion of the veil, then, as with the crash of a thunderstorm, the tower in

which the sufferer hid his sorrow falls in ruins to the ground. The conquered foe rises more fierce than before his defeat and captivity; he shakes with fury the prison doors, the frame trembles with long shudderings, sobs and sighs heave the breast, the tears, too long contained within bounds, overflow their swollen banks, bounding and rushing as if after the heavy rain of a thunderstorm.

Such was Odile.

At length she lifted her beautiful head; she wiped her tear-stained cheeks, and with her arm on the elbow of her chair, her cheek resting on her hand, and her eyes tenderly fixed on a picture on the wall, she resumed in slow and melancholy tones:

"When I go back into the past, sir, when I return to my first impressions, my mother's is the picture before me. She was a tall, pale, and silent woman. She was still young at the period to which I am referring. She was scarcely thirty, and yet you would have thought her fifty. Her brow was silvered round with hair white as snow; her thin, hollow cheeks, her sharp, clear profile—her lips ever closed together with an expression of pain—gave to her features a strange character in which pride and pain seemed to contend for the mastery. There was nothing left of the elasticity of youth in that aged woman of thirty—nothing but her tall, upright figure, her brilliant eyes, and her voice, which was always as gentle and sweet as a dream of childhood. She often walked up and down for hours in this very room, with her head hanging down, and I, an unthinking child, ran happily along by her side, never aware that my mother was sad, never understanding the meaning of the deep melancholy revealed by those furrows that traversed her fair brow. I knew nothing of the past, to me the present was joy and happiness, and oh! the future!—the dark, miserable future—there was none! My only future was to-morrow's play!"

Odile smiled bitterly, and went on:

"Sometimes I would happen, in my noisy play, to disturb my mother in her silent walk; then she would stop,

look down, and, seeing me at her feet, would slowly bend, kiss me with an absent smile, and then again resume her interrupted walk and her sad gait. Since then, sir, whenever I have desired to search back in my memory for remembrances of my early days, that tall, pale woman has risen before me, the image of melancholy. There she is," pointing to a picture on the wall—" there she is!—not such as illness made her as my father supposes, but that fatal and terrible secret. See!"

I turned round, and as my eye dwelt upon the portrait the lady pointed to, I shuddered.

It was a long, pale, thin face, cold and rigid as death, and only luridly lighted up by two dark, deep-set eyes, fixed, burning, and of a terrible intensity.

There was a moment's silence.

"How much that woman must have suffered!" I said to myself, with a pain striking at my heart.

"I know not how my mother made that terrible discovery," added Odile, "but she became aware of the mysterious attraction of the Black Pest, and their meetings in Hugh Lupus's tower; she knew it all—all! She never suspected my father—ah, no!—but she perished away by slow degrees under this consuming influence! and I myself am dying."

I bowed my head into my hands and wept in silence.

"One night," she went on, "one night—I was only ten—my mother, with the remains of her superhuman energy, for she was near her end that night, came to me when I lay asleep. It was in winter; a stony cold hand caught me by the wrist. I looked up. Before me stood a tall woman; in one hand she held a flaming torch, with the other she held me by the arm. Her robe was sprinkled with snow. There was a convulsive movement in all her limbs, and her eyes were fired with a gloomy light through the long locks of white hair which hung in disorder round her face. It was my mother; and she said, 'Odile, my child, get up and dress! You must know it all!' Then taking me to Hugh

Lupus's tower she showed me the open subterranean passage. 'Your father will come out that way,' she said, pointing to the tower; 'he will come out with the she-wolf; don't be frightened, he won't see you.' And presently my father, bearing his funeral burden, came out with the old woman. My mother took me in her arms and followed; she showed me the dismal scene on the Altenberg, of which you know. 'Look, my child,' she said; 'you must, for I—am going to die soon. You will have to keep that secret. You alone are to sit up with your father,' she said impressively—'you alone. The honor of your family depends upon you!' And so we returned. A fortnight after my mother died, leaving me her will to accomplish, and her example to follow. I have scrupulously obeyed her injunctions as a sacred command, but oh, at what a sacrifice! You have seen it all. I have been obliged to disobey my father and to rend his heart. If I had married I should have brought a stranger into the house and betrayed the secret of our race. I resisted. No one in this castle knows of the somnambulism of my father, and but for yesterday's crisis, which broke down my strength completely, and prevented me from sitting up with my father, I should still have been its sole depository. God has decreed otherwise, and has placed the honor and reputation of my family in your keeping. I might demand of you, sir, a solemn promise never to reveal what you have seen to-night. I should have a right to do so."

"Madam," I said, rising, "I am ready."

"No, sir," she replied, with much dignity, "I will not put such an affront upon you. Oaths fail to bind base men, and honor alone is a sufficient guarantee for the upright. You will keep that secret, sir, I know you will keep it, because it is your duty to do so. But I expect more than this of you, much more, and this is why I consider myself obliged to tell you all!"

She rose slowly from her seat.

"Doctor Fritz," she resumed in a voice which made every nerve within me quiver with deep emotion, "my

strength is unequal to the burden; I bend beneath it. I need a helper, a friend. Will you be that friend?"

"Madam," I replied, rising from my seat, "I gratefully accept your offer of friendship. I cannot tell you how proud I am of your confidence; but still, allow me to unite with it one condition."

"Pray speak, sir."

"I mean that I will accept that title of friend with all the duties and obligations which it shall impose upon me."

"What duties do you mean?"

"There is a mystery overhanging your family; that mystery must be discovered and solved at any cost. That Black Pest must be apprehended. We must find out where she comes from, what she is, and what she wants!"

"Oh, but that is impossible!" she said, with a movement of despair.

"Who can tell that, madam? Perhaps Divine Providence may have had a design connected with me in sending Sperver to fetch me here."

"You are right, sir. God never acts without consummate wisdom. Do whatever you think right. I give my approval in advance."

I raised to my lips the hand which she tremblingly placed in mine, and went out full of admiration for this frail and feeble woman, who was, nevertheless, so strong in the time of trial. Is anything grander than duty nobly accomplished?

XII

An hour after the conversation with Odile, Sperver and I were riding hard on the she-wolf's trail.

Three hours later we found a recent footprint.

But at five o'clock it was almost dark, and still we seemed no nearer our quarry. We were in a close and narrow glen between two precipitous spaces of rock. The fir-trees met over our heads; under our feet ran a mere thread of the stream. In the dis-

X

I WANDERED around the castle of Nideck unable to find the exit from which I had commenced my melancholy journey.

So much anxiety and uneasiness were beginning to tell upon my mind; I staggered on, wondering if I was not mad, unable to believe in what I had seen, and yet alarmed at the clearness of my own perceptions.

My mind in confusion passed in review that strange man waving his torch overhead in the darkness, howling like a wolf, coldly and accurately going through all the details of an imaginary murder without the omission of one ghastly detail or circumstance, then escaping and committing to the furious torrent the secret of his crime; these things all harassed my mind, hurried confusedly past my eyes, and made me feel as if I were laboring under a nightmare.

Lost in the snow, I ran to and fro panting and alarmed, and unable to judge which way to direct my steps.

As day drew near the cold became sharper; I shivered, I execrated Sperver for having brought me from Fribourg to bear a part in this hideous adventure.

At last, exhausted, my beard a mass of ice, my ears nearly frostbitten, I discovered the gate and rang the bell with all my might.

It was then about four in the morning. Knapwurst made me wait a terribly long time. His little lodge, cut in the rock, remained silent; I thought the little hunchbacked wretch would never have done dressing; for of course I supposed he would be in bed asleep.

I rang again.

This time his grotesque figure appeared abruptly, and he cried to me from the door in a fury:

"Who are you?"

"I?—Doctor Fritz."

"Oh, that alters the case," and he went back into his lodge for a lantern, crossed the outer court where the snow

came up to his middle, and staring at me through the grating, he exclaimed:

"I beg your pardon, Doctor Fritz; I thought you would be asleep up there in Hugh Lupus's tower. Were *you* ringing? Now that explains why Sperver came to me about midnight to ask if anybody had gone out. I said no, which was quite true, for I never saw you going out."

"But pray, Monsieur Knapwurst, do for pity's sake let me in, and I will tell you all about that, by and by."

"Come, come, sir, a little patience."

And the hunchback, with the slowest deliberation, undid the padlock and slipped the bars, whilst my teeth were chattering, and I stood shivering from head to foot.

"You are very cold, doctor," said the diminutive man, "and you cannot get into the castle. Sperver has fastened the inside door, I don't know why; he does not usually do so; the outer gate is enough. Come in here and get warm. You won't find my little hole very inviting, though. It is nothing but a sty, but when a man is as cold as you are, he is not apt to be particular."

Without replying to his chatter, I followed him in as quickly as I could.

We went into the hut, and in spite of my complete state of numbness, I could not help admiring the state of picturesque disorder in which I found the place. The slate roof leaning against the rock, and resting by its other side on a wall not more than six feet high, showed the smoky, blackened rafters from end to end.

The whole edifice consisted of but one apartment, furnished with a very uninviting bed, which the dwarf did not often take the trouble to make, and two small windows with hexagonal panes, weather-stained with the rainbow tints of mother-of-pearl. A large square table filled up the middle, and it would be difficult to account for that massive oak slab being got in, unless by supposing it to have been there before the hut was built.

On shelves against the walls were rolls of parchment, and

old books great and small. Wide open on the table lay a fine black-letter volume, with illuminations, bound in vellum, clasped and cornered with silver, apparently a collection of old chronicles. Besides there was nothing but two leathern armchairs, bearing on them the unmistakable impression of the misshapen figure of this learned gentleman.

I need not stay to do more than mention the pens, the jar of tobacco, five or six pipes, lying here and there, and in a corner a small castiron stove, with its low, open door wide open, and throwing out now and then a volley of bright sparks; and to complete the picture, the cat arching her back, and spitting threateningly at me with her armed paw uplifted.

All this scene was tinted with that deep rich amber light in which the old Flemish painters delighted, and of which they alone possessed the secret, and never left it to the generations after them.

"So you went out last night, doctor?" inquired my host, after we had both installed ourselves, and while I had my hands in a warm place upon the stove.

"Yes, pretty early," I answered. "I had to look after a patient."

This brief explanation seemed to satisfy the little hunchback, and he lighted his blackened boxwood pipe, which was hanging over his chin.

"You don't smoke, doctor?"

"I beg your pardon, I do."

"Well, fill any one of these pipes. I was here," he said, spreading his yellow hand over the open volume. "I was reading the chronicles of Hertzog when you came."

"Ah, that accounts for the time I had to wait! Of course you stayed to finish the chapter?" I said, smiling.

He owned it, grinning, and we both laughed together.

"But if I had known it was you," he said, "I should have finished the chapter another time."

There was a short silence, during which I was observing the very peculiar physiognomy of this misshapen being—

those long deep wrinkles that moated in his wide mouth, his small eyes with the crow's feet at the outer corners, that contorted nose, bulbous at its end, and especially that huge double-storied forehead of his. The whole figure reminded me not a little of the received pictures of Socrates, and while warming myself and listening to the crackling of the fire, I went off into contemplations on the very diversified fortunes of mankind.

"Here is this dwarf," I thought, "an ill-shaped, stunted caricature, banished into a corner of Nideck, and living just like the cricket that chirps beneath the hearthstone. Here is this little Knapwurst, who in the midst of excitement, grand hunts, gallant trains of horsemen coming and going, the barking of the hounds, the trampling of the horses, and the shouts of the hunters, is living quietly all alone, buried in his books, and thinking of nothing but the times long gone by, whilst joy or sorrow, songs or tears, fill the world around him, while spring and summer, autumn and winter, come and look in through his dim windows, by turns brightening, warming, and benumbing the face of nature outside. Whilst men in the outer world are subject to the gentle influences of love, or the sterner impulses of avarice, hoping, coveting, longing, and desiring, he neither hopes, nor desires, nor covets anything. As long as he is smoking his pipe, with his eyes feasting on a musty parchment, he lives in the enjoyment of dreams, and he goes into raptures over things long, long ago gone by, or, which have never existed at all; it is all one to him. 'Hertzog says so and so, somebody else tells the tale a different way,' and he is perfectly happy! His leathery face gets more and more deeply wrinkled, his broken angular back bends into sharper angles and corners, his pointed elbows dig beds for themselves in the oak table, his skinny fingers bury themselves in his cheeks, his piggish gray eyes get redder over manuscripts, Latin, Greek, or mediæval. He falls into raptures, he smacks his lips, he licks his chops like a cat over a dainty dish, and then he throws himself upon that dirty litter, with his knees up to his chin, and he thinks he has had a delightful day! Oh,

Providence of God, is a man's duty best done, are his responsibilities best discharged, at the top or at the bottom of the scale of human life?"

But the snow was melting away from my legs, the balmy warmth of the stove was shedding a pleasant influence over my feelings, and I felt myself reviving in this mixed atmosphere of tobacco smoke and burning pinewood.

Knapwurst gravely laid his pipe on the table, and reverently spreading his hands upon the folio, said in a voice that seemed to issue from the bottom of his consciousness; or, if you like it better, from the bottom of a twenty-gallon cask:

"Doctor Fritz, here is the law and the prophets!"

"How so? what do you mean?"

"Parchment—old parchment—that is what I love! These old yellow, rusty, worm-eaten leaves are all that is left to us of the past, from the days of Charlemagne until this day. The oldest families disappear, the old parchments remain. Where would be the glory of the Hohenstauffens, the Leiningens, the Nidecks, and of so many other families of renown? Where would be the fame of their titles, their deeds of arms, their magnificent armor, their expeditions to the Holy Land, their alliances, their claims to remote antiquity, their conquests once complete, now long ago annulled? Where would be all those grand claims to historic fame without these parchments? Nowhere at all. Those high and mighty barons, those great dukes and princes, would be as if they had never been—they and everything that related to them far and near. Their strong castles, their palaces, their fortresses fall and molder away into masses of ruin, vague remembrancers! Of all that greatness, one monument alone remains—the chronicles, the songs of bards and minnesingers. Parchment alone remains!"

He sat silent for a moment, and then pursued his reflections:

"And in those distant times, while knights and squires rode out to war, and fought and conquered, or fought and

fell, over the possession of a nook in a forest, or a title, or a smaller matter still, with what scorn and contempt did they not look down upon the wretched little scribbler, the man of mere letters and jargon, half clothed in untanned hides, his only weapon an inkhorn at his belt, his pennon the feather of a goosequill! How they laughed at him, calling him an atom, or a flea, good for nothing! 'He does nothing, he cannot even collect our taxes, or look after our estates, whilst we bold riders, armed to the teeth, sword in hand, and lance on thigh, we fight, and we are the finest fellows in the land!' So they said when they saw the poor devil dragging himself on foot after their horses' heels, shivering in winter and sweating in summer, rusting and decaying in old age. Well, what has happened? That flea, that vermin, has kept them in the memory of men longer than their castles stood, long after their arms and their armor had rusted in the ground. I love those old parchments. I respect and revere them. Like ivy, they clothe the ruins and keep the ancient walls from crumbling into dust and perishing in oblivion!"

Having thus delivered himself, a solemn expression stole over his features, and his own eloquence made the tears of moved affection steal down his furrowed cheeks.

The poor hunchback evidently loved those who had borne with and protected his unwarlike but clever ancestors. And after all he spoke truly, and there was profound good sense in his words.

I was surprised, and said, "Monsieur Knapwurst, do you know Latin?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, but without conceit, "both Latin and Greek. I taught myself. Old grammars were quite enough; there were some old books of the count's thrown by as rubbish; they fell into my hands, and I devoured them. A little while after the count, hearing me drop a Latin quotation, was quite astonished, and said, 'When did you learn Latin, Knapwurst?' 'I taught myself, monseigneur.' He asked me a few questions, to which I gave pretty good answers. '*Parbleu!*' he cried, 'Knapwurst

knows more than I do; he shall keep my records.' So he gave me the keys of the archives; that was thirty years ago. Since that time I have read every word. Sometimes, when the count sees me mounted upon my ladder, he says, 'What are you doing now, Knapwurst?' 'I am reading the family archives, monseigneur.' 'Aha! is that what you enjoy?' 'Yes, very much.' 'Come, come, I am glad to hear it, Knapwurst; but for you, who would know anything about the glory of the house of Nideck?' And off he goes laughing. I do just as I please."

"So he is a very good master, is he?"

"Oh, Doctor Fritz, he is the kindest-hearted master! he is so frank and so pleasant!" cried the dwarf, with hands clasped. "He has but one fault."

"And what may that be?"

"He has no ambition."

"How do you prove that?"

"Why, he might have been anything he pleased. Think of a Nideck, one of the very noblest families in Germany! He had but to ask to be made a minister or a field-marshal. Well! he desired nothing of the sort. When he was no longer a young man he retired from political life. Except that he was in the campaign in France, at the head of a regiment he raised at his own expense, he has always lived far away from noise and battle; plain and simple, and almost unknown, he seemed to think of nothing but his hunting."

These details were deeply interesting to me. The conversation was of its own accord taking just the turn I wished it to take, and I resolved to get my advantage out of it.

"So the count has never had any exciting deeds in hand?"

"None, Doctor Fritz, none whatever; and that is the pity. A noble excitement is the glory of great families. It is a misfortune for a noble race when a member of it is devoid of ambition; he allows his family to sink below its level. I could give you many examples. That which would

be very fortunate in a trader's family is the greatest misfortune in a nobleman's."

I was astonished; for all my theories upon the count's past life were falling to the earth.

"Still, Monsieur Knapwurst, the lord of Nideck has had great sorrows, has he not?"

"Such as what?"

"The loss of his wife."

"Yes, you are right there; his wife was an angel; he married her for love. She was a Zaân, one of the oldest and best nobility of Alsace, but a family ruined by the Revolution. The Countess Odile was the delight of her husband. She died of a decline which carried her off after five years' illness. Every plan was tried to save her life. They traveled in Italy together, but she returned worse than she went, and died a few weeks after their return. The count was almost broken-hearted, and for two years he shut himself up and would see no one. He neglected his hounds and his horses. Time at last calmed his grief, but there is always a remainder of grief," said the hunchback, pointing with his finger to his heart; "you understand very well, there is still a bleeding wound. Old wounds, you know, make themselves felt in change of weather—and old sorrows, too—in spring, when the flowers bloom again, and in autumn when the dead leaves cover the soil. But the count would not marry again; all his love is given to his daughter."

"So the marriage was a happy one throughout?"

"Happy! why, it was a blessing for everybody!"

I said no more. It was plain that the count had not committed, and could not have committed, a crime. I was obliged to yield to evidence. But then, what was the meaning of that scene at night, that strange connection with the Black Pest, that fearful acting, that remorse in a dream, which impelled the guilty to betray their past actrocities?

I lost myself in vain conjectures.

Knapwurst relighted his pipe, and handed me one, which I accepted.

By that time the icy numbness which had laid hold of me had nearly passed away, and I was enjoying that pleasant sense of relief which follows great fatigue, when by the chimney corner in a comfortable easy-chair, veiled in wreaths of tobacco smoke, you yield to the luxury of repose, and listen idly to the duet between the chirping of a cricket on the hearth and the hissing of the burning log.

So we sat for a quarter of an hour.

At last I ventured to remark:

"But sometimes the count gets angry with his daughter?"

Knapwurst started, and fixing a sinister, almost a fierce and hostile eye upon me, answered:

"I know, I know!"

I watched him narrowly, thinking I might learn something in support of my theory, but he simply added, ironically:

"The towers of Nideck are high, and slander flies too low to reach their elevation!"

"No doubt; but still it is a fact, is it not?"

"Oh, yes, so it is; but after all it is only a craze, an effect of his complaint. As soon as the crisis is past all his love for mademoiselle comes back. I assure you, sir, that a lover of twenty could not be more devoted, more affectionate, than he is. That young girl is his pride and his joy. A dozen times I have seen him riding away to get a dress, or flowers, or what not, for her. He went off alone, and brought back the articles in triumph, blowing his horn. He would have intrusted so delicate a commission to no one, not even Sperver, whom he is so fond of. Mademoiselle never dares express a wish in his hearing, lest he should start off and fulfill it at once. The lord of Nideck is the worthiest master, the tenderest father, and the kindest and most upright of men. Those poachers who are forever infesting our woods, the old Count Ludwig would have strung them up without mercy; our count winks at them; he even turns them into gamekeepers. Look at Sperver! Why, if Count Ludwig was alive, Sperver's bones would long ago have been rattling in chains; instead of which he is head huntsman at the castle."

All my theories were now in a state of disorganization. I laid my head between my hands and thought a long while.

Knapwurst, supposing that I was asleep, had turned to his folio again.

The gray dawn was now peeping in, and the lamp turning pale. Indistinct voices were audible in the castle.

Suddenly there was a noise of hurried steps outside. I saw someone pass before the window, the door opened abruptly, and Gideon appeared at the threshold.

XI

SPERVER'S pale face and glowing eyes announced that events were on their way. Yet he was calm, and did not seem surprised at my presence in Knapwurst's room.

"Fritz," he said briefly, "I am come to fetch you." I rose without answering, and followed him.

Scarcely were we out of the hut when he took me by the arm and drew me on to the castle.

"Mademoiselle Odile wants to see you," he whispered.

"What! is she ill?"

"No, she is much better, but something or other that is strange is going on. This morning, about one o'clock, thinking that the count was nearly breathing his last, I went to wake the countess; with my hand on the bell my heart failed me. 'Why should I break her heart?' I said to myself. 'She will learn her misfortune only too soon; and then to wake her up in the middle of the night, weak and frail as she is, after such shocks, might kill her at a stroke.' I took a few minutes to consider, and then I resolved I would take it all on myself. I returned to the count's room. I looked in—not a soul was there! Impossible! the man was in the last agonies of death. I ran into the corridor like a madman. No one was there! Into the long gallery—no one! Then I lost my presence of mind, and rushing again into the young countess's room, I rang again. This time she appeared, crying out: 'Is my father dead?' 'No.' 'Has he disappeared?' 'Yes,

madam. I had gone out for a minute—when I came in again——' 'And Doctor Fritz, where is he?' 'In Hugh Lupus's tower.' 'In *that* tower?' She started. She threw a dressing gown around her, took her lamp, and went out. I stayed behind. A quarter of an hour after she came back, her feet covered with snow, and so pale and so cold! She set her lamp upon the chimneypiece, and looking at me fixedly, said: 'Was it you who put the doctor into that tower?' 'Yes, madam.' 'Unhappy man! you will never know the extent of the harm you have done.' I was about to answer, but she interrupted me: 'No more; go and fasten every door and lie down. I will sit up. To-morrow morning you will find Doctor Fritz at Knapwurst's, and bring him down to me. Make no noise, and mind, you have seen nothing and know nothing!'"

"Is that all, Sperver?" I asked.

He nodded gravely.

"And about the count?"

"He is in again. He is better."

We had got to the antechamber. Gideon knocked at the door gently, then he opened it, announcing:

"Doctor Fritz."

I took a pace forward, and stood in the presence of Odile. Sperver had retired, closing the door.

A strange impression crossed my mind at the sight of the young countess standing pale and still, leaning upon the back of an armchair, her eyes of feverish black velvet. But she stood calm and firm.

"Doctor," she said, motioning me to a chair, "pray sit down; I have a very serious matter to speak to you about."

I obeyed in silence.

In her turn she sat down and seemed to be collecting her thoughts.

"Providence or an evil destiny, I know not which, has made you witness of a mystery in which lies involved the honor of my family."

So she knew it all!

I sat confounded and astonished.

"Madam, believe me, it was but by chance——"

"It is useless," she interrupted: "I know it all, and it is frightful!"

Then in a heartrending, appealing voice, she cried: "My father is not a guilty man!"

I shuddered, and with hands outstretched, cried: "Madam, I know it; I know that the life of your father has been one of the noblest and loveliest."

Odile had half risen from her seat, as if to protest, by anticipation, against any supposition that might be injurious to her father. Hearing me, myself, taking up his defense, she sank back again, and covering her face with her hands, the tears began to flow.

"God bless you, sir!" she exclaimed. "I should have died with the very thought that a breath of suspicion was harbored against him."

"Ah, madam, who could possibly attach any reality to the action of a somnambulist?"

"That is quite true, sir; I had had that thought myself, but appearances—pardon me—yet I feared—still I knew Doctor Fritz was a man of honor."

"Pray, madam, be calm."

"No," she cried, "let me weep on. It is such a relief; for ten years I have suffered in secret. Oh, how I suffered! That secret, so long shut up in my breast, was killing me. I should soon have died, like my dear mother. God has had pity upon me, and has sent you, and made you share it with me. Let me tell you all, sir, do let me!"

She could speak no more. Sobs and tears broke her voice. So it always is with proud and lofty natures. After having conquered grief, and imprisoned it, buried, and, as it were, crushed down in the secret depths of the mind, they seem happy, or, at any rate, indifferent to the eyes of the uninformed around, and the eye of the most watchful observer might be mistaken; but let a sudden shock break the seal, an unexpected rending of a portion of the veil, then, as with the crash of a thunderstorm, the tower in

which the sufferer hid his sorrow falls in ruins to the ground. The conquered foe rises more fierce than before his defeat and captivity; he shakes with fury the prison doors, the frame trembles with long shudderings, sobs and sighs heave the breast, the tears, too long contained within bounds, overflow their swollen banks, bounding and rushing as if after the heavy rain of a thunderstorm.

Such was Odile.

At length she lifted her beautiful head; she wiped her tear-stained cheeks, and with her arm on the elbow of her chair, her cheek resting on her hand, and her eyes tenderly fixed on a picture on the wall, she resumed in slow and melancholy tones:

"When I go back into the past, sir, when I return to my first impressions, my mother's is the picture before me. She was a tall, pale, and silent woman. She was still young at the period to which I am referring. She was scarcely thirty, and yet you would have thought her fifty. Her brow was silvered round with hair white as snow; her thin, hollow cheeks, her sharp, clear profile—her lips ever closed together with an expression of pain—gave to her features a strange character in which pride and pain seemed to contend for the mastery. There was nothing left of the elasticity of youth in that aged woman of thirty—nothing but her tall, upright figure, her brilliant eyes, and her voice, which was always as gentle and sweet as a dream of childhood. She often walked up and down for hours in this very room, with her head hanging down, and I, an unthinking child, ran happily along by her side, never aware that my mother was sad, never understanding the meaning of the deep melancholy revealed by those furrows that traversed her fair brow. I knew nothing of the past, to me the present was joy and happiness, and oh! the future!—the dark, miserable future—there was none! My only future was to-morrow's play!"

Odile smiled bitterly, and went on:

"Sometimes I would happen, in my noisy play, to disturb my mother in her silent walk; then she would stop,

look down, and, seeing me at her feet, would slowly bend, kiss me with an absent smile, and then again resume her interrupted walk and her sad gait. Since then, sir, whenever I have desired to search back in my memory for remembrances of my early days, that tall, pale woman has risen before me, the image of melancholy. There she is," pointing to a picture on the wall—" there she is!—not such as illness made her as my father supposes, but that fatal and terrible secret. See!"

I turned round, and as my eye dwelt upon the portrait the lady pointed to, I shuddered.

It was a long, pale, thin face, cold and rigid as death, and only luridly lighted up by two dark, deep-set eyes, fixed, burning, and of a terrible intensity.

There was a moment's silence.

" How much that woman must have suffered!" I said to myself, with a pain striking at my heart.

" I know not how my mother made that terrible discovery," added Odile, " but she became aware of the mysterious attraction of the Black Pest, and their meetings in Hugh Lupus's tower; she knew it all—all! She never suspected my father—ah, no!—but she perished away by slow degrees under this consuming influence! and I myself am dying."

I bowed my head into my hands and wept in silence.

" One night," she went on, " one night—I was only ten—my mother, with the remains of her superhuman energy, for she was near her end that night, came to me when I lay asleep. It was in winter; a stony cold hand caught me by the wrist. I looked up. Before me stood a tall woman; in one hand she held a flaming torch, with the other she held me by the arm. Her robe was sprinkled with snow. There was a convulsive movement in all her limbs, and her eyes were fired with a gloomy light through the long locks of white hair which hung in disorder round her face. It was my mother; and she said, 'Odile, my child, get up and dress! You must know it all!' Then taking me to Hugh

Lupus's tower she showed me the open subterranean passage. 'Your father will come out that way,' she said, pointing to the tower; 'he will come out with the she-wolf; don't be frightened, he won't see you.' And presently my father, bearing his funeral burden, came out with the old woman. My mother took me in her arms and followed; she showed me the dismal scene on the Altenberg, of which you know. 'Look, my child,' she said; 'you must, for I—am going to die soon. You will have to keep that secret. You alone are to sit up with your father,' she said impressively—'you alone. The honor of your family depends upon you!' And so we returned. A fortnight after my mother died, leaving me her will to accomplish, and her example to follow. I have scrupulously obeyed her injunctions as a sacred command, but oh, at what a sacrifice! You have seen it all. I have been obliged to disobey my father and to rend his heart. If I had married I should have brought a stranger into the house and betrayed the secret of our race. I resisted. No one in this castle knows of the somnambulism of my father, and but for yesterday's crisis, which broke down my strength completely, and prevented me from sitting up with my father, I should still have been its sole depository. God has decreed otherwise, and has placed the honor and reputation of my family in your keeping. I might demand of you, sir, a solemn promise never to reveal what you have seen to-night. I should have a right to do so."

"Madam," I said, rising, "I am ready."

"No, sir," she replied, with much dignity, "I will not put such an affront upon you. Oaths fail to bind base men, and honor alone is a sufficient guarantee for the upright. You will keep that secret, sir, I know you will keep it, because it is your duty to do so. But I expect more than this of you, much more, and this is why I consider myself obliged to tell you all!"

She rose slowly from her seat.

"Doctor Fritz," she resumed in a voice which made every nerve within me quiver with deep emotion, "my

strength is unequal to the burden; I bend beneath it. I need a helper, a friend. Will you be that friend?"

"Madam," I replied, rising from my seat, "I gratefully accept your offer of friendship. I cannot tell you how proud I am of your confidence; but still, allow me to unite with it one condition."

"Pray speak, sir."

"I mean that I will accept that title of friend with all the duties and obligations which it shall impose upon me."

"What duties do you mean?"

"There is a mystery overhanging your family; that mystery must be discovered and solved at any cost. That Black Pest must be apprehended. We must find out where she comes from, what she is, and what she wants!"

"Oh, but that is impossible!" she said, with a movement of despair.

"Who can tell that, madam? Perhaps Divine Providence may have had a design connected with me in sending Sperver to fetch me here."

"You are right, sir. God never acts without consummate wisdom. Do whatever you think right. I give my approval in advance."

I raised to my lips the hand which she tremblingly placed in mine, and went out full of admiration for this frail and feeble woman, who was, nevertheless, so strong in the time of trial. Is anything grander than duty nobly accomplished?

XII

An hour after the conversation with Odile, Sperver and I were riding hard on the she-wolf's trail.

Three hours later we found a recent footprint.

But at five o'clock it was almost dark, and still we seemed no nearer our quarry. We were in a close and narrow glen between two precipitous spaces of rock. The fir-trees met over our heads; under our feet ran a mere thread of the stream. In the dis-

tance a tiny speck of deep blue widened as we advanced; it was the issue from the glen.

"Fritz," said Sperver, "we are in the bed of the Tunkelbach. This is the wildest spot in the Black Forest. The end is a pit called *La Marmite du Grand Gueulard,* the muckel-mouthed giant's kettle. In the spring, when the snow is melting, the Tunkelbach hurls all its waters into it, a depth of two hundred feet. There is an awful uproar; the waters dash down and then splash up again and fall in spray on all the hills around. Sometimes it even fills the Roche Creuse, but just now it must be as dry as a powder-flask."

Whilst I was listening to Gideon's explanations, I was at the same time meditating upon this dark and fearful glen, and I reflected that the instinct which attracts the brutes into such retreats as these, far from the light of heaven, away from everything bright and cheerful, must partake of the nature of remorse. Those animals which love the open sunshine—the goat, aloft upon a high conspicuous peak, the horse flying across the wide plain, the dog capering round his master, the bird bathed in sunlight—all breathe joy and happiness; they bask and sing, and rejoice in dancing and delight. The kid nibbling the tender grass under the shade of the great trees is as poetic an object as the shelter that it loves; the fierce boar is as rough as the tangled brakes through which he loves to run his huge bristly back; the eagle is as proud and lofty as the sky-piercing crags on which he perches as his home; the lion is as majestic as the arching vaults of the caves where he makes his den; but the wolf, the fox, and the ferret seek the darkness that conforms to their ugly deeds; fear and remorse dog their steps.

I was still dreamily pursuing these thoughts, and I was beginning to feel the keen air moving upon my face, for we were approaching the outlet of the gorge, when all at once a red light struck the rock a hundred feet above us, purpling the dark green of the fir-trees, and lighting up the wreaths of snow.

"Ha!" cried Sperver, "we have got her at last!"

My heart leaped; we stood, closely pressed, the one against the other.

The dog growled low and deep.

"Cannot she escape?" I asked in a whisper.

"No, she is caught like a rat in a trap. There is no way out of *La Marmite du Grand Gueulard* but this, and everywhere all round the rocks are two hundred feet high. Now, vile hag, I hold you!"

He alighted in the ice-cold stream, handing me his bridle. I caught in the silence the click of the lock of his gun, and that slight noise threw me into a tremor of apprehension.

"Sperver, what are you about?"

"Don't be alarmed; it is only to frighten her."

"Very well, then, but no blood. Remember what I told you—the ball which strikes the Pest slays the count!"

"Don't trouble yourself," was the answer.

He went away without further parley. I could hear the splash of his feet in the water; then I saw his tall figure at the opening of the dark glen, black against the purple background. He stood five minutes motionless. Attentive, bending forward, I looked and listened, still moving onward. As he returned I was but a few yards from him.

"Hark!" he whispered mysteriously. "Look there!"

At the end of the hollow, scooped out perpendicularly, like a quarry in the mountain side, I saw a bright fire unrolling its golden spires beneath the vault of a cave, and before the fire sat a man with his hands clasped about his knees, whom I recognized by his dress as the Baron de Zimmer-Bluderich.

He sat motionless, his forehead resting between his hands. Behind him lay a dark gaunt form extended on the ground. Further on, his horse, half lost in the shade, reared his neck, gazed on us with eyes fixed, ears erect, and nostrils distended.

I stood rooted to the ground.

How did the Baron de Zimmer happen to be in that lonely

wilderness at such a time? What did he want there? Had he lost his way?

The most contradictory conjectures were passing in confusion through my excited brain, and I could not tell what conclusion to arrive at, when the baron's horse began to neigh, and the master raised his head.

"Well, Donner, what is the matter now?" said he.

Then he, too, directed his gaze our way, straining his eyes through the darkness.

That pale face, with its strongly-marked features, thin lips, and thick black eyebrows meeting together, and forming a deep hollow on the brow in the form of a long vertical wrinkle, would have struck me with admiration at any other time; while now an inexplicable anxiety laid hold of me, and I was filled with vague apprehensions.

Suddenly the young man exclaimed:

"Who goes there?"

"I, monseigneur," answered Sperver, coming forward—"Sperver, chief huntsman to the lord of Nideck."

A flash shot from the Baron's quick eye; not a muscle of his countenance quailed. He rose to his feet, gathering his pelisse over his shoulders. I drew towards me the horses and the dog, and this animal suddenly began howling fearfully.

Is not everyone, more or less, subject to superstitious fears? At these dismal sounds I trembled, and a cold shudder crept through my whole body.

Sperver and the baron stood at a distance of fifty yards from each other; the first immovable in the midst of the deep glen, his gun unslung from his shoulder, the other erect upon the level platform outside of the cave, carrying his head high, fixing on us a haughty eye and a proud look of superiority.

"What do you want here?" he asked aggressively.

"We are looking for a woman," replied the old poacher—"a woman who comes every year prowling about Nideck, and our orders are to take her."

"Has she stolen anything?"

"No."

"Has she committed murder?"

"No, monseigneur."

"Then what do you want with her? What right have you to pursue her?"

"And you—what right have you over her?" answered Sperver, with an ironical smile. "See, there she is. I can see her at the bottom of the cave. What right have you to meddle with our affairs? Don't you know that we are here in the domains of Nideck, and that we administer justice and execute our own decrees?"

The young man changed color, and said coldly:

"I have no account to render to you."

"Beware," replied Sperver. "I am come with proposals of peace and conciliation. I am here on behalf of the lord Yeri-Hans. I am in the execution of my duty, and you are putting yourself in the wrong."

"Your duty!" cried the young man bitterly. "If you talk about your duty you will oblige me to do mine!"

"Well, do it," cried the huntsman, whose features were becoming disturbed with anger.

"No," replied the baron, "I am not responsible to you, and you shall not come here!"

"That's what we shall soon see!" said Sperver, drawing nearer to the cave.

The young man drew his hunting-knife. Perceiving this menacing action, I was about to dart between them, but happily the hound, which I was holding by his collar, slipped from me with a violent shock and threw me on the ground. I thought the baron would be lost, but at that instant a wild shriek rose from the dark bottom of the cavern, and as I rose to my feet I saw the old woman standing erect before the fire, her tattered garments hanging loosely about her, her gray and tangled locks floating wildly in the wind; she flung her bony arms in the air and uttered prolonged piercing howls like the cry of agony of the hungry wolf in the long cold nights of winter when famine is gnawing his entrails.

Never in my life have I seen a more fearful apparition.

Sperver, motionless, his eyes riveted on the fearful object before him, and his mouth open with astonishment, stood as if rooted to the earth. But the powerful dog, surprised himself at this unexpected sight, stood still for a moment; then with a bend of his bristling back, in preparation for a mighty leap, he made a rush with a deep, impatient growl, which made me tremble. The platform before the cave was about eight or nine feet from the level where we stood, or he would have reached it at a single bound. I can yet hear him clearing a way through the snowy brambles, the baron flinging himself before the woman with a piercing cry, "My mother!" then the dog taking another spring, and Sperver, quick as lightning, raising his gun, and bringing down the poor animal dead at the young man's feet.

This was but the work of a second. The gulf had been illuminated with a momentary flash, and the wild echoes were vibrating with the explosion from rock to rock, till it died in the far distance. Then silence again settled on the gloomy scene, as darkness after the lightning.

When the smoke of the explosion had cleared away I saw Lieverlé lying outstretched at the foot of the rock, and the woman fainting in the arms of the young man. Sperver, pale with concentrated rage and excitement, and eying the young baron darkly, dropped the butt of his gun to the ground, his features discomposed, and his eyes half hid in his gloomy frown.

"Seigneur de Bluderich," he cried, with his hand extended, "I have killed my best friend to save the life of that unhappy woman, your mother! Thank God that her life is bound up with that of the Count of Nideck! Take her away! take her hence, and never let her return here again; if you do I cannot answer for what old Sperver may be driven to do."

Then, with a glance at the poor dog:

"Oh, Lieverlé, Lieverlé!" he cried, "was it to end thus? Come, Fritz, let us go. I cannot stay here. I might do something that I should have to repent of!"

And, laying hold of Fox by the mane, he was going to

throw himself into the saddle, but suddenly his feelings of distress overcame all restraint, and bowing his head upon his horse's neck, he burst into sobs and tears, and wept like a child.

XIII

Sperver had gone, bearing the body of poor Lieverlé in his cloak. I had declined to follow; my sense of duty kept me by this unhappy woman, and I could not leave her without violence to my own feelings.

Besides, I must confess, I was curious to see a little more closely this strange, mysterious being, and therefore as soon as Sperver had disappeared in the darkness of the glen, I began to climb up to reach the cavern.

There I beheld a strange sight.

Extended upon a large cloak of white fur, lay the aged woman in a long and ragged robe of purple, her fingers clutching her breast, a golden arrow through her gray hair.

Never shall I forget the figure of this strange woman; her vulture-like features distorted with the last agonies of death, her eyes set, her gasping mouth, were fearful to look upon. Such might have been the terrible Queen Fredegonde.

The baron, on his knees at her side, was trying to restore her to animation; but I saw at a glance that the wretched creature was dying, and it was not without a profound sense of pity that I took her by the arm.

"Leave madame alone—don't touch her," cried the young man with irritation.

"I am a surgeon, monsigneur."

He looked in silence at me for a moment, then arising, said:

"Pardon me, sir; pray forgive my hasty language."

He trembled with excitement, scarcely yet subdued, and presently he went on—

"What is your opinion, sir?"

"It is over—she is dead."

Then, without speaking another word, he sat upon a large stone, with his forehead resting upon his hand, and his elbow on his knee, his eyes motionless, as still as a statue.

I sat near the fire, watching the flames rising to the vaulted roof of the cave, and casting lurid reflections upon the rigid features of the corpse.

We had sat there an hour as motionless as statues, each deep in thought, when suddenly lifting his head, the baron said:

"Sir, all this utterly confounds me. Here is my mother—for twenty-six years I thought I knew her—and now an abyss of horrible mysteries opens before me. You are a doctor; tell me, did you ever know anything so dreadful?"

"Monseigneur," I replied, "the Count of Nideck is afflicted with a complaint strikingly similar to that from which your mother appears to have suffered. If you feel enough confidence in me to communicate to me the facts which you have yourself observed, I will gladly tell you what I know myself; for perhaps this exchange of our experiences might supply me with the means to save my patient."

"Willingly, sir," he replied, and without any further prelude he informed me that the Baroness de Bluderich, a member of one of the noblest families in Saxony, took, every year towards autumn, a journey into Italy, with no attendant besides an old manservant, who possessed her entire confidence; that that man, being at the point of death, had desired a private interview with the son of his old master, and that at that last hour, prompted, no doubt, by the pangs of remorse, he had told the young man that his mother's visit to Italy was only a pretense to enable her to make, unobserved, a certain excursion into the Black Forest, the object of which was unknown to himself, but which must have had something fearful in its character, since the baroness returned always in a state of physical prostration, ragged, half dead, and that weeks of rest alone could restore her after the hideous labors of those few days.

This was the purport of the old servant's disclosures to

the young baron. He believed that in these revelations he was only fulfilling his duty.

The son, anxious at any sacrifice to know the truth of this account, had, that very year, ascertained it, first by following his mother to Baden, and then by penetrating on her track into the gorges of the Black Forest. The footsteps which Sébalt had tracked in the woods were his.

When the baron had thus imparted his knowledge to me, I thought I ought not to conceal from him the mysterious influence which the appearance of the old woman in the neighborhood of the castle exercised over the count, nor the other circumstances of this unaccountable series of events.

We were both amazed at the extraordinary coincidence between the facts narrated, the mysterious attraction which these beings unconsciously exercised the one over the other, the tragic drama which they performed in union, the familiarity which the old woman had shown with the castle and its most secret passages, without any previous examination of them; the costume which she had discovered in which to carry out this secret act, and which could only have been rummaged out of some mysterious retreat revealed to her by the strange instinct of insanity. Finally, we were agreed that there are unknown, unfathomed depths in our being, and that the mystery of death is not the only secret which God has veiled from our eyes, although it may seem to us the most important.

But the darkness of night was beginning to yield to the pale tints of early dawn. A bat was sounding the departure of the hours with a singular note resembling the gurgling of liquid from a narrow bottle-neck. A neighing of horses was heard far up the defile; then, with the first rays of dawn, we distinguished a sledge driven by the baron's servant; its bottom was littered with straw; on this the body was laid.

I mounted my horse, which seemed not sorry to use his limbs again, which had been numbed by standing upon ice and snow the whole night through. I rode after the sledge

to the exit from the defile, when, after a grave salutation—the usual token of courtesy between the nobility and the people—they drove off in the direction of Hirschland, and I rode towards the towers of Nideck.

At nine I was in the presence of Mademoiselle Odile, to whom I gave a faithful narrative of all that had taken place.

Then repairing to the count's apartments, I found him in a very satisfactory state of improvement. He felt very weak, as was to be expected after the terrible shocks of such crises as he had gone through, but had returned to the full possession of his clear faculties, and the fever had left him the evening before. There was, therefore, every prospect of a speedy cure.

A few days later, seeing the old lord in a state of convalescence, I expressed a desire to return to Fribourg, but he entreated me so earnestly to stay altogether at Nideck, and offered me terms so honorable and advantageous, that I felt myself unable to refuse compliance with his wishes.

I shall long remember the first boar hunt in which I had the honor to join with the count, and especially the magnificent return home in a torchlight procession.

I had just had supper, and was going up into Hugh Lupus's tower, completely knocked up, when, passing Sperver's room, whose door was half open, shouts and cries of joy reached my ears. I stopped, when the most jovial spectacle burst upon me. Around the massive oaken table beamed twenty square rosy faces, bright and ruddy with gayety and fun.

The hob and nobbing of the glasses gave out an incessant tinkling and clattering. There was sitting Sperver with his bossy forehead, his mustaches bedewed with Rhenish wine, his eyes sparkling, and his gray hair rather disordered; at his right was Marie Lagoutte, on his left Knapwurst. He was raising aloft the ancient silver-gilt and chased goblet, dimmed with age, and on his manly chest glittered the silver plate of his shoulder belt, for, according to his custom on a hunting day, he was still wearing the uniform of his office.

The color of Marie Lagoutte's cheeks, rather redder even than usual, told of an evening of jollity, and her broad cap frills seemed as if they were wanting to fly all abroad; she sat laughing, now with one, then with another.

Knapwurst, squatting in his armchair, with his head on a level with Sperver's elbow, looked like a big pumpkin. Then came Tobias Offenloch, so red that you would have thought he had bathed his face in the red wine, leaning back with his wig upon the chairback and his wooden leg extended under the table. Farther on loomed the melancholy long face of Sébalt, who was peeping with a sickly smile into the bottom of his wineglass.

Besides these worthies there were present the waiting people, men and women servants, comprising all that little community which springs up around the board of the great people of the land, and belongs to them as the ivy, and the moss, and the wild convolvulus belong to the monarch of the forests.

Upon the groaning board lay a vast ham, displaying its concentric circles of pink and white. Then among the gayly patterned plates and dishes, came the long-necked bottles containing the produce of the vineyards that border the broad and flowing Rhine—long German pipes with little silver chains, and long shining blades of steel.

The light of the lamp shed over the whole scene its amber colored hue and left in the shade the old gray and time-stained walls, where hung in ample numbers the brazen convolutions of the hunting horns and bugles.

What an original picture! The vaulted roof was ringing with the joyous shouts of laughter.

Sperver, as I have already told, was lifting high the full bumper, and singing the song of Black Hatto, the Burgrave,

"I am king on these mountains of mine,"

while the rosy dew of Affenthal hung trembling from his long mustaches. As soon as he caught sight of me he stopped, and holding out his hand:

"Fritz," said he, "we only wanted you. It is a long

time since I felt so comfortable as I do to-night. You are welcome, old boy!"

As I gazed upon him with surprise—for since the death of Lieverlé I had never seen him smile—he added more seriously:

"We are celebrating the return of monseigneur to his health, and Knapwurst is telling us stories."

All the guests turned my way, and I was saluted with kindly welcomes on all sides.

I was dragged in by Sébalt, seated near Marie Lagoutte, and found a large glass of Bohemian wine in my hand before I could quite understand the meaning of it all.

The old hall was echoing with merry peals of laughter, and Sperver, throwing his arm round my neck, holding his cup high, and with an attempt at gravity which showed plainly that the wine was up in his head, shouted:

"Here is my son! He and I—I and he—until death! Here's the health of Doctor Fritz!"

Knapwurst, standing as high as he was able upon the seat of his armchair, not unlike a turnip half divided in two, leaned towards me and held out his glass. Marie Lagoutte shook out the long streamers of her cap, and Sébalt, upright before his chair, as gaunt and lean as the shade of the wild jäger amongst the heather, repeated, "Your health, Doctor Fritz!" whilst the flakes of silvery foam ran down his cup and floated gently down upon the stone-flagged floor.

Then there was a moment's silence. Every guest drank. Then, with a single clash, every glass was set vigorously down upon the table.

"Bravo!" cried Sperver.

Then turning to me:

"Fritz, we have already drunk to the health of the count and of Mademoiselle Odile; you will do the same."

Twice had I to drain the cup before the vigilant eyes of the whole table. Then I, too, began to look grave. Could it have been drunken gravity? A luminous radiance seemed shed on every object; faces stood out brightly from the darkness, and looked more nearly upon me; in truth, there

were youthful faces and aged, pretty and ugly, but all alike beamed upon me kindly, and lovingly, and tenderly; but it was the youngest, at the other end of the table, whose bright eyes attracted me, and we exchanged long and wistful glances, full of affection and sympathy!

Sperver kept on humming and laughing. Suddenly putting his hand upon the dwarf's misshapen back, he cried:

"Silence! Here is Knapwurst, our historian and chronicler. He is preparing to speak. This hump holds all the history of the house of Nideck, from the beginning of time!"

The little hunchback, not at all indignant at so ambiguous a compliment, directed his benovolent eyes upon the face of the huntsman, and replied:

"You, Sperver, you are one of the reiters whose story I have been telling you. You have the arm, and the courage, and the whiskers of a reiter of old! If that window opened wide, and a reiter was to hold out his hand at the end of his long arm to you, what would you say to him?"

"I would say, 'You are welcome, comrade; sit down and drink. You will find the wine just as good and the girls just as pretty as they were in the days of old Hugh Lupus.' Look!"

And he pointed with his glance at the jolly young faces that brightened the farther end of the table.

Certainly the damsels of Nideck were lovely. Some were blushing with pleasure to hear their own praises; others half veiled their rosy cheeks with their long drooping eyelashes, while one or two seemed rather to prefer to display their sweet blue eyes by raising them to the smoky ceiling. I wondered at my own insensibility that I had never before noticed these fair roses blooming in the towers of the ancient manor.

"Silence!" cried Sperver for the second time. "Our friend Knapwurst is going to tell us again the legend he related to us just now."

"Won't you have another instead?" asked the hunchback.

"No. I like this best."

"I know better ones than that."

"Knapwurst," insisted the huntsman, raising his finger impressively, "I have reasons for wishing to hear the same again and no other. Cut it shorter if you like. There is a great deal in it. Now, Fritz, listen!"

The dwarf, rather under the influence of the sparkling wine he had taken, rested his elbows on the table, and with his cheeks clutched in his bony fingers and his eyes staring from his head with his concentrated efforts to speak with becoming seriousness, he cried as if he were publishing a proclamation:

"Bernard Hertzog relates that the burgrave Hugh, surnamed Lupus, or the Wolf, when he was old, used to wear a cowl, which was a kind of a knitted cap that covered in the crest of the knight's helmet when engaged in fighting. When the helmet tired him he would take it off and put on the knitted cowl, and its long cap fell around his shoulders.

"Up to his eighty-second year Hugh still wore his armor, though he could hardly breathe in it.

"Then he sent for Otto of Burlach, his chaplain, his eldest son, Hugh, his second son, Berthold, and his daughter, the red-haired Bertha, wife of a Saxon chief named Bluderich, and said to them:

"'Your mother, the she-wolf, has bequeathed you her claws; her blood flows, mingled with mine, in your veins. In you the wolf's blood will flow from generation to generation; it shall weep and howl among the snows of the Black Forest. Some will say, "Hark! the wind howls!" others, "No, it is the owl hooting!" But not so; it is your blood, mine and the blood of the she-wolf who drove me to murder Hedwige, my wife, before God and the Church. She died under my bloody hands! Cursed be the she-wolf! for it is written, "I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children." The crime of the father shall be visited upon the children until justice shall have been satisfied.'

"Then old Hugh the Wolf died.

"From that dreary day the north wind has howled across

the wilds, and the owl has hooted in the dark, and travelers by night know that it is the blood of the she-wolf weeping for the day of vengeance that will come, whose blood will be renewed from generation to generation—so says Hertzog—until the day when the first wife of Hugh, Hedwige the Fair, shall reappear at Nideck under the form of an angel to comfort and to forgive!"

Then Sperver, rising from his seat, took a lamp and demanded of Knapwurst the keys of the library, and beckoned to me to follow him.

We rapidly traversed the long dark gallery, then the armory, and soon the archive chamber appeared at the end of the great corridor.

All noises had died away in the distance. The place seemed quite deserted.

Once or twice I turned round, and could then see with a creeping feeling of dread our two long, fantastic shadows in ghostly fashion writhing in strange distortions upon the high tapestry.

Sperver quickly opened the old oak door, and with torch uplifted, his hair all bristling in disorder, and excited features, walked in the first. Standing before the portrait of Hedwige, whose likeness to the young countess had struck me at our first visit to the library, he addressed me in these solemn words:

"Here is she who was to return to comfort and forgive! She has returned! At this moment she is downstairs with the old count. Look well, Fritz; do you recognize her? Is it not Odile?"

Then turning to the picture of Hugh's second wife:

"There," he said, "is Huldine, the she-wolf. For a thousand years she has wept in the deep gorges amongst the pine forests of the Schwartzwald; she was the cause of the death of poor Lieverlé; but henceforward the lords of Nideck may rest secure, for justice is done and the good angel of this lordly house has returned!"